UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CONCIENCIA SOCIALISTA
AND EDUCATION IN CUBA

By

HÉCTOR MANUEL GONZÁLEZ ©

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Héctor Manuel González
9325 - 98 A Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6E 3N2

Date: Sept. 22, 1997

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *CONCIENCIA SOCIALISTA* AND EDUCATION IN CUBA here submitted by Héctor Manuel González in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in INTERNATIONAL/INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION.

Dr. Marilyn Assheton-Smith

Dr. Swee-Hin Toh

Fred Judson

Dr. Fred Judson

Date: August 26, 1997

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of the people that, throughout the nations, have given their lives in the struggle for peace, justice and freedom. I symbolise this dedication in the names of Jaime Coloma and Marisol Vera, who will probably never find their way into history books. These are two of my friends, forgotten heroes in the struggle of my people against fascism in Chile. My dedication extends also to my family for having been amongst the most committed and brave of the fighters and they deserve to be celebrated.

This work I dedicate as well to Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the revolutionary hero that inspired millions in this world. In the 30th year of his assassination, I salute his memory, and in doing so, I summon the memory of Salvador Allende, Víctor Jara, Pablo Neruda and Violeta Parra, from whom I acquired not only inspiration in the struggle but also the courage to continue in very adverse conditions.

In invoking the dead, I also embrace the living, those who on a daily basis face injustice, poverty and humiliation amidst a neoliberal agenda that turns a blind eye to the suffering of the dispossessed and marginalised of the world and a deaf ear to the claims of billions to cease the devastation of human and animal life and our environment. I salute those committed to promoting change.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my children, Alejandra, Carolina, and Esteban, who have grown up so far from their extended family and the beautiful beaches of Arica, our home town, and had no say in this re-location to a life in exile, and who have supported me all along.

PREFACE

América Latina ya no es una amenaza. Por tanto, ha dejado de existir. Rara vez las fábricas universales de opinión pública se dignan a echarnos alguna ojeada. Y sin embargo Cuba, que tampoco amenaza a nadie, es todavía una obsesión universal.	Latin America is no longer a threat. Hence, it no longer exists. Seldom the universal manufacturers of public opinion bother to look at us. Neither is Cuba a threat to anyone, however, she is still a universal obsession.
No le perdonan que siga estando, que maltrecha y todo siga siendo. Esa islita sometida a feroz estado de sitio, condenada al exterminio por hambre, se niega a dar el brazo a torcer. ¿Por dignidad nacional? No, no, nos explican los entendidos: por vocación suicida. Con la pala en alto, los enterradores esperan. Tanta demora los irrita. Al Este de Europa han hecho un trabajo rápido y total, contratados por los propios cadáveres, y ahora están ansiosos por arrojar tierra sin flores sobre esta porfiada dictadura roja que se niega a aceptar su destino. Los enterradores ya tienen preparada la maldición fúnebre. No para decir que la revolución cubana ha muerto de muerte matada: para decir que ha muerto porque morir quería.	They don't forgive that she is still there, that battered and all, she still exists. That little island, subjected to a fierce state of siege, condemned to annihilation by hunger, refuses to give in. Is it national dignity? No, no, the scholars explain: it is a suicidal vocation. With their shovels raised the gravediggers await. So much delay irritates them. In Eastern Europe they did a complete and swift job, hired by the cadavers themselves, and now they are eager to throw dirt without flowers over this stubborn red dictatorship that refuses to accept its destiny. The gravediggers have already prepared a funereal curse. Not to say that the Cuban revolution died a killed death but to say it died because to die it wanted.
Excerpt from *Ser como ellos* by Eduardo Galeano	(Translation mine)

ABSTRACT

Experiences as a young boy in Chile motivated a passionate personal quest for the meaning of socialism and its impact on people. In the struggle against fascism, the Cuban case represented an almost mythological experience. As an educator, I understand the impact of education upon future generations. If under capitalism, self-gain, individualism and profit-making are instilled in the consciousness of the people, what then are the counterpart concepts being reproduced in Cuba and how are they expressed?

I became a participant observer and I entered into the lives of twelve Cubans living or visiting Canada. Phenomenological analysis revealed three categories, each with a number of subthemes which arise from prolonged formal and informal contacts. The participants passionately described their reverence for *la patria*. This establishes the base for understanding the connection between education and *conciencia socialista* which emerges as they are taught the value of manual labour and moral contribution in a collective society. Even in the face of generational and economic challenges, the participants generally remain grounded in these basic principles.

The findings reveal a strong connection between the Cuban people and the Revolution, especially evident is the overwhelming support for Fidel Castro. The powerful commitment of the Cuban people to the Revolution reflects the commitment of the Revolution to the people. Important in this are the educational programs intended to instill *conciencia socialista* and which appear to have had a lasting effect in the lives of these people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank and acknowledge the support and friendship of the participants in this study for their valuable information and the time they spent with me.

Many other people have had an enormous impact in my life as I passed through the University of Alberta. They have contributed to enrich and widen my perspectives on human and world issues. Among them are my comrades of the old Issues Study Group, of which I was a founding member, and later Club IDC (International Development Concerns), for which I was president for two years. Members will be able to see in this thesis a reflection of our dialogues and encounters.

My appreciation extends also to the members of my committee, Dr. Fred Judson for his friendly support and to Dr. Swee-Hin Toh and Dr. Virginia Cawagas, partners who share a deep sense of praxis that we rarely encounter in the academic community, for having introduced me to the peaceful dimensions of education.

A most special place in my heart is for Dr. Marilyn Assheton-Smith, my long time advisor, thesis supervisor and friend, for her warmth and affection and for her splendid wisdom and guidance, without which I would have never succeeded.

My last words are for my *compañera*, Donna Chovanec, whose love and patience, together with an exceptional intelligence, helped me in completing this thesis. When I was about to quit, she gave me support and, sometimes, a kick in the butt to keep me going. The readability of this work is, to a great extent, proof of her enormous editorial assistance. Thank you, *polola*!

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Researcher: Personal Background and Biases

Shortly after I turned seven years of age, a socialist government was democratically elected by the people in my country. I remember the festive atmosphere that surrounded me and that lasted for the next three years. It seemed like a long-lasting celebration. In a very unconscious way, I happened to be taking part in what became the first revolutionary socialist regime ever elected to government in human history. It was a coalition of left wing parties from the far left to the social democrats which, under the umbrella of the *Unidad Popular*, supported Dr. Salvador Allende in the election of September 1970.

My memories of the time are perhaps more clear than for most seven year old children and that is one of my greatest treasures. My primary school teacher happened to be a well known and respected Communist politician. Apart from his political activities, he was an actor, director, playwright and hosted a radio show for children. As his protégés, my oldest brother and I became the main actors in several of his plays and his co-announcers in his radio show. At a young age, I was considered a very talented actor, singer and radio announcer, much of that thanks to his tutelage and sponsorship. The plays in which I participated were politically oriented and designed to bring forward a message of the revolutionary changes that were being promoted by the Allende regime. They were performed in factories for the workers, in community halls for the people of the poor neighbourhoods and in stadiums for the students and the public in general. I remember talking about *conciencia socialista* (socialist consciousness) during the performances, without having a clue of what I was talking about. I only sensed that it was something "good," especially after observing the way people reacted to the plays. I was part of the tremendous effort of the government and the Chilean Left to build a new society and bring about radical changes in the way democracy operates by creating the government of the people by the people.

These changes were reflected in the massive participation of workers, students, men and women in the different activities organised by the government oriented to improving the living conditions of millions of people. It was also reflected in the strong support given to the socialist regime by the workers. Social programs were implemented to help people access decent housing. Health care became free and universal. Education ceased to be a privilege for only those few of the elite social classes and became a right and even an obligation for all. These changes affected me directly in my daily life as a primary school student.

Every morning at school the students would have a glass of milk, cereal and cookies for breakfast. At midday (the largest meal of the day), the school provided us with a full meal. Every Friday the students all over the country would take home one or two kilograms of powdered milk. One of the slogans of the time was: "No child in Chile will go to bed without a glass of milk." During those few years, I never went to bed hungry. The school truly became our second home where students would be educated, cared for and fed. When I was home I would participate in the voluntary campaigns organised by *La Junta de Vecinos* (Neighbourhood Association) and promoted by the government. The major campaign was called *Póngale el Hombro* (Put Your Shoulders Into It). People would volunteer physical and intellectual labour for the design and construction of roads, community halls, recreation areas, day-care centres, schools, houses for the poor, health clinics, etc. Children usually helped in the collection of garbage around their neighbourhood.

I once asked my parents why they were doing these activities and why they seemed so happy doing them, and the response was: "It's our *conciencia socialista* that calls us." Now I could finally establish some link between what I had been saying during my theatrical performances and the real meaning of this expression. I then understood that it was *conciencia socialista* which made people happy while working for the benefit of everybody in the community without expecting compensation. In my innocence, I could not articulate this feeling of a magnificent era being built little by little around me and from which I was not excluded.

All this was to come crashing to a sudden and tragic end when I was 10 years old. On the morning of September 11, 1973, during the celebrations of the month of Chilean independence, and shortly after the celebration of three years of socialism in Chile, I was performing a song with my brother in front of the school when I saw a teacher run into the school and faint as she talked to her colleagues. The principal, evidently shaken, interrupted the performance and said: "Students, our president has been killed. There's been a military coup d'etat. Please, everybody go home." My school was surrounded by the military as we left. Many of my teachers were arrested and I never saw some of them again. Some were tortured while in prison. In the country, more than 30,000 of Allende's supporters were killed just on the first day of the military regime that took over on that terrible day. I saw people crying in the streets and the mourning continued at home. Between 1973 and 1989, over one million people went to exile and about 10,000 political prisoners are still *desaparecidos* (disappeared). The death toll and social impact of seventeen years of military rule has never been clearly established.

I was ten then and my life crumbled. People lived in fear. I never saw those happy faces again. The celebration was over and forgotten. My teacher was one of the "lucky" ones, because in times of indiscriminate murder when the communists became the main target, to be tortured and sent to exile was one of the less severe punishments. My parents became bitter and sad. Silence surrounded the neighbourhoods and the people did not dare to talk about the past nor the present. Words such as justice, work, human rights, freedom, even bread, were forbidden. In the struggle against the dictatorship, they became symbols of resistance. *"Pan, trabajo, justicia y libertad"* was a famous but dangerous slogan. People became suspicious of everybody else, including their own family. Books were burnt, music related to the previous era was destroyed and any hint of having been an Allende supporter was erased from the face of the earth. Unemployment rose and jobs were given to military supporters as a way of compensating them for services such as spying on their neighbours. Any social policy started by the socialist regime was abolished. All projects and laws passed by the previous government were replaced by new military decrees. The schools discontinued the meal program and the powdered milk at the end of the week was no longer available. For the first time, we heard of children in my neighbourhood and in the whole nation going to bed hungry. The people were no longer doing voluntary works, most of the people were not even there anymore. It was forbidden by law to ask about someone who had disappeared. It was to be a long time before I would see again some hint of what I had come to value as the *conciencia socialista*.

A clandestine movement against the dictatorship emerged very soon after the coup. I had no idea that one day I would become one of its leaders and that because of that my whole life would acquire a different perspective and I would finally end in exile in Canada, far from my beloved land, speaking "the language of imperialism."

During the difficult times of clandestinity, we received moral support from those countries sympathetic to our predicament. Cuba was among these countries from which we gained strength through song, poetry and ideological messages. All I really knew about Cuba at that time was that it was one of the most dangerous names to be pronounced, that Cuba had a socialist regime and that it had strongly supported the Allende regime in Chile. I learned to associate Cuba with my short-lived experience from age 7 to 10. I always wanted to know more about that little island that had been building socialism at the doorstep of the most powerful capitalist/imperialist country, the same that had planned, instigated, and funded the military coup in my own country.

I have always wondered what would've happened in Chile if the Allende dream had come true. What would've happened if Chile was still a socialist country? Of course, it didn't happen. However, by looking into Cuba I expect I can find some answers that will help me in my quest. I believe that socialism may be the only viable alternative for a Third World impoverished by capitalism, class divisions, consumerist individualism and the increasing commodification and destruction of natural resources. I believe that people that have been educated and raised under a socialist regime, like Cubans, do think and perceive the world differently. I strongly believe that by looking into the life experiences of the participants in this study, all of them Cubans, I can shed some light on this matter and provide a different perspective of humanity. I also believe that by writing about Cuba, I honour the memory of the millions everywhere that have fought for a more just and humane world as well as my friends that were assassinated in that process. I also want to use this thesis as a therapy to heal my own wounds. Thus, I do this for my own sake, as well as for that of the ones I left behind.

Introduction to the Research

With the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959 a new era was commencing for the entire world, especially for the American continent, where the impoverished nations of the South were seeking some kind of alternative to a capitalist system that so far had only proven beneficial for a few and subjected the overwhelming majority of the population to extreme poverty. The United States, on the other hand, trying to counter-balance the economic and ideological power of the Soviet Union, regarded Cuba as a 'dangerous' example for the poor nations of Latin America. The Cuban revolutionary leadership had, therefore, the enormous need of promoting and constructing socialism, to create strong support in the Cuban people for the revolutionary process to succeed in an efficient way. For this, they determined that they needed people to think and behave socialist (Carnoy, 1990).

From the first day, the Cuban leadership was forced to make constant and systematic reformulations of the model of socialism that they wanted to build. For most of the first ten years of the revolutionary regime, they adopted almost exclusively an idealistic approach that proposed the change of the superstructure, or 'subjective conditions', before changing the economic base, or 'objective conditions.' This approach was based on the Maoist concept of *The Great Leap Forward* and was supposed to be achieved through the education of the masses to the goals and the meaning of the revolution

(Mesa-Lago, 1979). The implementation of this approach at an early stage of the Revolution was considered critical and a priority for the construction of strong support for the regime in the Cuban population.

The consequent emphasis placed by the state through its institutions was on the promotion of moral incentives (e.g., medals or special recognition to outstanding citizens, workers, students, etc.), mass mobilisation, voluntary work, social altruism, and egalitarianism, as some of the essential components of the *conciencia socialista*[1] they wished to build. The education system was then shaped for the accomplishment of these goals (Tablada, 1989). The task was to create "The New Socialist Man"[2] in accordance with Marxism:

> Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a political movement, a revolution; the revolution is necessary, therefore... to found society anew. (Marx & Engels, 1965, p. 34)

In a socialist regime, education is openly identified as one of the State's main tools of ideological reproduction. The Cuban government immediately revolutionised and mobilised the educational system to accomplish the goal of developing the "New Socialist Man" that would become the base of support and promotion of the socialist society. Through the education of the masses the Revolution would ensure that their liberation message became known by the people. Education became an investment for the future of the Revolution.

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[1] "*Conciencia*, a key concept of the revolution, has been translated as an amalgam of consciousness, conscience, conscientiousness and commitment..." (Gillette, 1972 p. 9) This complexity of meaning is the reason I have decided to use the Spanish word here rather than the English word "consciousness." "New Socialist Man" and *conciencia socialista* are used interchangeably.

[2] While Man was often assumed to refer to people, this has been challenged by feminists in recent years. I will attempt not to use this term in my own writing but it will appear frequently in quotes from an earlier time.

Evidence of this is found in studies such as the one conducted by Wald (1978). According to her analysis, children, parents, teachers and workers in the schools all are aware that the

> school [is] a commitment on the part of the Revolution... to provide education for the youth of tomorrow and a commitment on the part of the youth to educate themselves to work for the future development of the country. (p. 352)

Wald supports this assertion with numerous quotes such as the following wherein a Cuban school administrator shared his views on the education system.

> We're not educating our students apolitically. The education we give them corresponds to the needs and interests of our society; they're not being educated in isolation from these problems. Our students must understand their role in this society" (p. 362).

Similarly, a secondary school student summarised: "It's the Revolution in general that educates us" (p. 367).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union (Cuba's main economic and ideological partner) and the Socialist Block of Eastern Europe, Cuba became almost completely economically and politically isolated from the rest of the world. The U. S. has since tightened the trade embargo against the Island depriving the Cuban people of the ability to satisfy their basic needs. For the first time since the triumph of the Revolution, the Cuban people have been facing scarcity and uncertainty. The whole revolutionary process has been challenged by the sudden turn of events in the so called "New World Order" of the post Cold War era (Mesa Lago, 1993).

The existence of the egalitarian and collective oriented consciousness of "The New Socialist Man" had been taken for granted in a country where, for over 30 years people depended on the state to provide one of the best living standards in the American continent (Carnoy, 1990; Carnoy & Wertheim, 1979). For the first time, Cuba would test the existence of the socialist person that the Revolution claimed to have built as the leadership elaborated an emergency plan requiring the voluntary participation of all Cubans. This is the so called "Special Period in Peacetime" plan. From this plan, voluntary production programs exist nowadays which seem to be an example of the collective and social nature of the response to this crisis, contradicting the scepticism voiced by some scholars, such as Carnoy (1990), who have questioned whether this new *conciencia socialista* was ever achieved.

Many questions arise as the economic situation continues to deteriorate in Cuba. One of the most evident questions is, will the people of Cuba remain faithful and loyal to the revolutionary principles regardless of the tough times they are experiencing? Are they ready to continue to sacrifice their lives for the benefit and survival of their Revolution? Certainly, the revolutionary leaders hoped to develop a population ready to sacrifice when needed. Whether in good times or bad, this is the basis of the Cuban consciousness predicted by Ernesto Che Guevara (1968) which he addressed in a letter sent to his friend Carlos Quijano.

> It is not a matter of how many kilograms of meat people can eat in a year or how many times they can go on vacation to the beach, or how many wonderful goods from abroad they can buy with the present salaries. It is precisely about the individuals feeling fulfilled, with a personal interior wealth and much more responsibility. The people in our country know that the glorious times are times of sacrifice; they know about sacrifice. (translation mine)

Did Fidel Castro also expect this from the Cuban people? Perhaps he too was confident about his compatriots' response in times of crisis. Is this what he referred to in January 1963 in the closing ceremony of the Congress of Women of the Americas as he encouraged the Cuban people to remain united while facing difficult situations?

> This will be the conduct of our people now and in the future, the conduct of our revolutionary militants, who do not become discouraged, who do not fear to fight, who do not fear difficult circumstances, whatever they may be. In Cuba there will be no division. Here there will be unity because we need it, because we have the imperialist enemy in front of us who wants to destroy us, and we need unity to resist. We need unity to win. We need unity more than ever to go forward, and with our unity, our firmness, and our line we shall continue to go forward facing the difficulties, facing the inconveniences, whatever they may be. (Castro, 1963)

The Cuban people have not so far mobilised to demand the ousting of the Castro regime. Apparently, Fidel Castro still counts on strong national support and the Cuban people appear united facing these difficult times. Even with the North American media ever watchful for signs of discontent and repression on the Island, the fact remains that no major uprisings have ever been reported. This may be interpreted as an indication of the people's willingness to continue to support the Castro regime and the revolutionary process. Is this the proof of the existence of *conciencia socialista*?

Research Problem

The intention of this research is not to become an exhaustive political analysis of socialism based on the Cuban model. Rather, the study focuses on the participants' *conciencia socialista* through an in-depth exploration of their lived experience of socialism to determine the role of education in the formation of this ideological framework. Ethnographic and phenomenological research methods were used to collect and analyse information from Cubans who were visiting or working in Canada for fixed periods of time and who were dedicated to returning to their country.

Research Questions

1. How is *conciencia socialista* manifested in this group of Cubans?
2. What is the link between the Cuban educational system and the development of *conciencia socialista*?

Limitations

The research design of this study emerged out of fortuitous and extended contacts with Cuban people who were visiting or working in Canada over a recent 5 year period. Availability, proximity and established relationships were advantageous to their selection as research participants. There has been no contact with Cubans on the Island itself as a trip to Cuba to pursue this study would require a lengthy approval process and the costs represent a further obstacle for the accomplishment of such an endeavour.

Implications

Cuba represents one of the last socialist regimes still in existence. Some speculate that the still tougher economic blockade imposed by the U. S. may soon precipitate the collapse of the revolutionary regime in the Island. A study founded on the life experiences of socialism in a group of Cuban workers/visitors may serve as another attempt to understand the impact and the differences of the socialisation process under a socialist regime while it still exists.

If we accept that education is one of the main tools of reproduction of the ideological, societal and cultural underpinnings in the socialisation process, then an understanding of the lived experience of some members of that society may reflect the degrees to which education has been successful in accomplishing this goal. Studying the experiences of people themselves is a valuable contribution to scholarly knowledge, an adjunct to the wealth of theoretical and policy-oriented information now available about Cuba.

Thesis Overview

Chapter 2 discusses relevant literature on Cubanology, i.e., historical background, education in the Island before and during the Revolution, and the relevant programs implemented by the Revolution toward the consolidation of the socialist process and the achievement of *conciencia socialista*. Chapter 3 addresses the ethnographic and phenomenological methodology. In Chapter 4, the data is presented thematically and in Chapter 5, I conclude with a reflective analysis of the findings and a discussion of the implications.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The revolutionary process that started in 1959 radically changed the organisation of Cuban society. Those changes were oriented to eradicate injustices that were part of every regime since the time of Spanish colonisation. One of the most important was constituted by the transformation of the educational system which must be understood within the ideological framework of the Revolution itself. The following literature review will first provide an historical perspective which will establish the dimension, the need, and the importance of the radical changes. This will be followed by the conceptual framework of the revolutionary process as it relates to education and examples of the most essential reforms.

Historical Background: Cuba - U. S. Relations

Historically, Cuba has represented a very particular kind of temptation for her northern neighbour that dates to the years previous to U. S. independence (Navarro, 1992). Already in 1762, Havana was invaded and looted in the so called 'Conquest of Havana' by Admiral Vernon and a contingent of men that came from the then British colonies of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia (Garcia-Regueiro, 1970).

After U. S. independence, the expansionist intentions of the new nation sought Louisiana, Florida, and Texas as priority goals, but Cuba also remained a highly appreciated objective (Frank, 1961). John Quincy Adams referred to Cuba as "a fruit, that when ripened, will fall from the Spanish tree to the lap of the United States" (Garcia-Regueiro, 1970, p. 21). Several diplomatic missions sent by Washington to negotiate the transfer of Cuba to its possession were turned down by the Spaniards who considered the selling of Cuba a "matter of dignity;" to give away Cuba meant to give away the national honour (Garcia-Regueiro, 1970).

In 1868, there was a patriotic subversion against the Spanish empire in Cuba. This struggle for independence would become known as 'The War of the Ten Years.' This war ended with the defeat of the rebels and a peace treaty signed by both sides on February 10, 1878. This episode, however, awakened the will to fight for independence in the Cuban people who, led by Jose Marti,[3] started a new patriotic movement to fight for freedom from Spanish domain on February 24, 1895 (Garcia-Regueiro, 1970; Navarro, 1992; Ydigoras, 1966).

This new liberation war was considered by U. S. politicians as 'counterproductive' for U. S. interests in the island. An eventual defeat of the Spanish army would mean the emergence of a completely independent nation, very difficult to re-colonise. Thus, in 1897, Washington offered to mediate in the conflict to avoid a total victory for the rebels. Spain rejected the offer; instead, the Spanish Crown offered a partially autonomous government for Cuba which did not satisfy the rebels and the struggle continued (Garcia-Regueiro,1970).

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[3] Jose Marti was to later become the inspiration of the Cuban Revolution.

At the end of 1897, a mysterious incident would change the situation dramatically in favour of the United States. Washington, with the pretext of protecting national interests in the island, sent the armoured ship 'The Maine' to Habana Bay. After a few days, the war ship was destroyed by an explosion that the U. S. government attributed to a gunshot coming from a Spanish fort. According to Spain, there had been an explosion inside the ship (probably an accident). Soon after the incident, the U. S. government declared war on Spain and demanded that the Crown give up their possession of Cuba. Following the Spanish refusal, the island was invaded and its army easily defeated by North American troops (Ydigoras, 1966).[4]

A peace treaty was signed in Paris on October 24, 1889 that ended the war between Spain and the U. S., in which the former was despoiled of Cuba, Puerto Rico, as well as the Philippines and other islands in the Pacific. For the U. S., it meant the strengthening of its imperialist goals and the beginning of a series of military interventions in Cuba that ended on January 1, 1959 with the defeat of the last U. S. sponsored military dictatorship, the Fulgencio Batista regime (Ydigoras, 1966).

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[4] The revolutionary army had been very successful in fighting Spain, therefore, the Spanish Army was already weak at the time of the U. S. attack on the island.

Education in Cuba Before the Revolution

After 1898, and highly influenced by the U. S. presence, Cuba started a forced process of modernisation and Americanisation (Paulston, 1971). The military forces occupying the island were instructed by U. S. president William McKinley to prepare Cubans for independence "in the interest and for the benefit of the people of Cuba and those possessed of rights and property in the island" (Paulston, 1971, p. 378).

According to Paulston (1971), illiteracy meant an obstacle for the stability of any government, so one of the main priorities of the United States was to make primary education compulsory. They created local boards of education and dictated a new school law based on that of the state of Ohio. "Cuba, however, is not Ohio and the law lasted only as long as the American troops occupied the island," concludes Paulston (1971, p. 379). Nevertheless, The U. S. influence on education in the Island remained important. The new ideas to which Cubans had been exposed resulted in the upper and middle classes being infused with the United Statian[5] educational models and many United Statian practices were adopted by Cuban educators. Paulston (1971) argues that, compared to any other Latin American nation, during the 1930's, Cuban education most closely resembled the U. S. educational system.

> However, graft and corruption plagued school administration [and] the compulsory education requirement soon became a dead issue... The public school system never was able to afford its own

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[5] I was raised in an Americanist environment. Within this tradition, "Americans" are any people born in this continent from Canada to the Patagonia. I will, therefore, use the English equivalent of the Spanish term, *Estado Unidense*, when referring to that which belongs to the United States, i.e., United Statian.

> buildings... [Hence] most classes took place in substandard rented or loaned structures. (Nelson cited in Paulston, 1971, p. 382)

Paulston (1971) states that the most serious defect of the Cuban education system was its failure "to meet the educational needs of the rural population [where people] lived in what can be described as a backward impoverished world centuries apart from modern urban Cuba" (p. 383). All this occurred in the midst of what the Economic Mission to Cuba, of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), qualified in its *Report on Cuba* (1952) as a "trend of retrogression" in the Cuban system of education marked by:

> fewer school-age children attending school and the number of hours of instruction a day had dropped to four hours. In many districts it dropped to only two hours a day. Only about one-half or less of the school-age children attended school and of some 180,000 children entering the first grade, less than 5,000 reached the eighth grade. (Paulston, 1971, p. 98)

Paulston (1971) also points out that while the national expenditure in public education was one-fifth of the state budget between 1952 and 1958, which in theory meant around ten dollars per capita (placing Cuba among the three Latin American nations with the highest state expenditure in education), "Cuba ranked nearly last in Latin America in terms of the percentage of school-age children enrolled [in schools]" (p. 379). Moreover, only 12 percent of the population between fifteen to nineteen years of age were enrolled in secondary education by 1953.[6]

However, for Paulston (1971), the qualitative and quantitative decline of Cuban schooling during the pre-Revolutionary decades cannot only be attributed to economic factors, or to the influence of the dictatorship, or to graft, and political turmoil, but also to the social differentiation that followed independence, when Cuba was under U. S. military occupation. Paulston (1971) identifies a "three-tier hierarchy" in Cuban society before 1959:

> an upper elite composed of plantation owners, businessmen, some successful professionals, politicians, and merchants; a middle stratum composed of most professional men, skilled workers, clerical employees, medium-sized farmers, and military men; and a lower stratum of unskilled urban workers, the rural proletariat, peasants, and the unemployed. (p. 384)

At the same time, this social differentiation generated a parallel educational hierarchy of schools linked directly to social class wherein the upper stratum sent their children to elite private schools or to the United States, the middle stratum sent their children to private schools, and the lowest stratum sent theirs to "the grossly inferior rural public schools, or went unschooled" (Paulston, 1971, p. 384).

In summary, the educational system in Cuba before the Revolution provided unequal opportunities to the people according to their economic

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[6] Most scholars studying education in Cuba before the Revolution, have based their statistics on the last official census, which was taken in 1953, during the Batista dictatorship. That census determined a 23.6% illiteracy rate on the Island, one of the lowest in Latin America at the time (Carnoy, 1990).

> status and place of residence.
>
> The system intensified rural-urban divisions and inculcated upper-class values, and fostered aspirations that were simply unrealistic for the vast majority of Cuban children and largely dysfunctional for national development (Paulston, 1971, p. 384).

Education in Cuba Under the Revolution

The transformation of the Cuban educational system constituted one of the main priorities for the revolutionary leadership even long before their triumph over the Batista regime. In 1953, after being arrested for his leadership of the July 26 rebel assault on the Moncada garrison, Fidel Castro made a speech in his own defence (known in English as *History Will Absolve Me*). In it, he vowed that a future revolutionary government would transform the educational system in Cuba "to remove the deficiencies noted and to hasten the creation of the new society" (Castro, 1961, p. 15). Immediately after defeating Batista, the revolutionaries devoted most of their energy to educating the population. Fidel Castro, in a speech given before the United Nations in September 1960, asserted:

> What did the Revolution find in coming to power? Thirty-seven and one-half percent of our population was illiterate, didn't know how to read and write; seventy percent of our rural children didn't have teachers... Cuba is today the first country of America that satisfied all the schooling needs, that has a teacher in every last corner of the mountains. (Castro, 1973, p. 23)[7]

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[7] As mentioned, Carnoy (1990) claims that the Revolution "inherited a well-educated population by Latin American standards" (p. 157). However, most of the so called "well-educated" eventually fled the Island which must have had an effect on the percentage of illiterates in Cuba.

Starting in September 1959, 10,000 schools were built all over the country. In the first year, "the Revolutionary government built more than 3000 new public schools, and 7000 additional teachers entered classrooms to teach more than 300,000 children attending school for the first time" (Paulston, 1971, p. 386). Sixty nine military posts of the old establishment (including the place where Castro was imprisoned for the attack on the Moncada garrison) were turned into schools with a capacity for 40,000 students. In a visit to the province of Camaguey, Castro (1959) stated that the objective for building more and more schools was to promote the ideals and values of the Revolution.

> Far from building fortresses, what the Revolution is doing is to destroy fortresses to make them into schools. Why? Is it perhaps that the Revolution will remain defenceless? No. Is it perhaps that we are going to disarm? No... Before there were armies to oppress the people, and now the people constitute the best army of the republic. Now the defenders of the republic are the citizens themselves. Why can the Revolution convert fortresses into schools? Because since January 1, since the triumph of the Revolution, each school has become a fortress of the Revolution, and the 10,000 schools which will be established by the revolutionary government in the course of this year will be 10,000 fortresses of the Revolution. Because each city, each village, each home has become a fortress of the Revolution... the Revolution is better defended than ever, because the people are defending it. (Castro, 1959)

The first integral educational reform started on December 26, 1959 (Castro, 1976). On July 6, 1961 the *Ley de Nacionalización de la Enseñanza* (Nationalisation of Educational Law) was promulgated declaring education exclusively public and free. All the 2,139 private schools in existence at the time were taken over by the state and, most important, education was declared compulsory from grade one to grade six. It would later be extended to grade nine. Garcia-Regueiro (1970) categorises the new structure of the educational system as follows:

I Pre-School (From 45 days to 5 years of age)
II Primary Education (6 to 11 years of age)
III Basic Secondary Education (12 to 14 years of age)
IV Pre-university and Professional Education (15 to 17 years of age)
V Higher Education

According to the Cuban Ministry of Education in their *Report to the Thirty First Conference*, by 1968, 93 percent of school-age children were attending primary school and 95 percent, secondary school (cited in Castro, 1976). In reference to the impressive effect on educational access, participation and expenditure, Paulston (1971) summarises:

> In 1958-1968, the number of primary and secondary public schools nearly doubled and accessibility to schooling in rural areas was much improved. The number of teachers tripled and working hours nearly doubled. Matriculation of students showed a twofold increase in primary school and a threefold increase in secondary school... State expenditures in education increased almost fourfold, and per capita expenditures almost threefold. (p. 387)

Che Guevara and the Creation of the "New Socialist Man"

Why was a radical transformation of the educational system necessary? Leiner (1973) refers to a question a journalist asked the then Cuban Minister of Education in a conference while visiting Italy. The questioner wanted to know if in Cuba education was an "instrument of the state," and the answer was: "Yes, of course, just as it was before the triumph of the Revolution, and as it is in the present day in Italy" (p. 14). As we have already seen, the educational system in pre-Revolutionary Cuba was a product and an image of the social, political, and economic system. The main task for the Revolution was to remove the dichotomy represented by public and private education as well as to re-orient the contents and goals of the educational system to match with those of the Revolution, in other words, the creation of the "New Socialist Man" (Lowy, 1973). In the words of Ernesto "Che" Guevara written in 1965 (see Guevara, 1977):

> The adopted economic structure emphasises the development of consciousness. To build communism, simultaneously with the building of the material base, we have to build the new socialist man. This is why it is so important to choose the appropriate instrument of mass mobilisation. This instrument must be of a moral nature, not leaving aside the material rewards of a social nature.

The Revolution declared its socialist character on April 16, 1961, however, the leadership did not seem to have a consensus regarding the type of socialist model to adopt so as to restructure the Cuban society and produce the "New Socialist Man" or *conciencia socialista* (Tablada, 1986). Influenced by the Maoist concept of The Great Leap Forward, one of the models proposed to accomplish this new *conciencia socialista* was promoted by Ernesto "Che" Guevara. According to Mesa-Lago (1979), this model consisted of three main objectives:

1. The total elimination of the market through a complete collectivisation of the means of production; a highly centralised planning system using computers; financing to every state owned industry by means of non-refundable loans with the profits going to the state; and a gradual elimination of money and material incentives.
2. The creation of an altruistic person, totally socialised and egalitarian: the "New Socialist Man." It required increasing the degree of consciousness of the masses mainly through education but also by means of mobilisation and voluntary work, and the introduction of moral incentives. As a prerequisite to the first objective, this would help the process of capital accumulation and economic development.
3. The 'exportation' of the Cuban revolutionary model to Latin America, based on the assumption that a continental revolution was necessary for the survival of socialism in Cuba.

The alternative model, brought forward by a group of leaders of the Revolution, such as Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, one of the most influential members of the Communist Party's Central Committee and president of the INRA (Institute for Agrarian Reform), and Marcelo Fernández, President of the National Bank, proposed a more pragmatic approach to socialism, where the building of a strong economic base was considered essential for the consolidation of the process, similar to the Soviet implementation of socialism. This model emphasised production efficiency and material rewards for those who devoted more of their effort to the success of the Revolution

(Del Aguila, 1984; Lowy, 1973; Mesa-Lago, 1979; Rabkin, 1991), as well as the "adoption of some market measures were [considered] essential to maintain productivity" (Rabkin, 1991, p. 117).

The Guevarist model, though, had supporters among the most powerful leaders of the Revolution, moreover, Guevara's opinion was very important to Castro. In consequence

> Castro sided squarely with Guevara, launching nothing short of a cultural and economic revolution, adopting the ideas concerning the creation of the "new man" and criticizing those obsessed with monetary calculations. (Del Aguila, 1984, p. 88)

Thus, for the first ten years of the Revolution, the Guevara formula succeeded over the more businesslike approach, although the latter was applied to parts of agriculture and foreign trade during that period (Carnoy, 1990; Lowy, 1973; Mesa-Lago, 1979; Rabkin, 1991; Tablada, 1989).

The implementation of Guevara's ideas on how to reach the desired level of *conciencia socialista* emerged as this revolutionary had become one of the greatest and most cherished leaders of the Revolution, second only to Fidel Castro himself. Guevara, through his involvement in the causes of the poor and marginalised peoples throughout Latin America and Africa, had built an image of a consequent man, a philosopher and a highly skilled economist and military strategist (Tablada, 1989). In consequence, his opinion had an enormous impact and relevance not only for the Cuban people but for most socialist and revolutionary societies, groups and organisations around the world. In the words of Marelys Valencia (1997, p. 3), for the Revolution

> Che's presence was of incalculable value. He was a living example of the concept of the new man that he was to define in some of his writings and speeches. He particularly attached great importance to setting an example, devoting himself to a constant demonstration of how an initiator of the changes of that time should act... This Argentine is eternally bound to Cuba as a friend and comrade in arms. That relationship also transformed him into a universal and timeless symbol which lives on in spite of his death.

The ideological platform on which socialism and ultimately communism would be built started its task in the early years of the Revolution. Within this optimistic context, Fidel Castro (1959) predicted to the Cuban people in Camaguey:

> A better future will come. What our fatherland has never had will come. Full national sovereignty, schools, culture, work, wealth for our people, land for our peasants will come to stay and, whatever it may cost, a better future and a more honourable and more worthy life for all Cubans will come.

The accomplishment of a *conciencia socialista* in the Cuban people required that society begin to appreciate the meaning and significance of manual labour in the process of building an egalitarian society. In socialist countries the worker is the essential and most important actor in the construction of their society and, in Marxist terms, ultimately results in the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Therefore, in Cuba the image of the worker began to be promoted as the most vital component of the Revolution. On this issue, Fidel Castro (1962) said in an interview with Jacques Arnol, chief editor of *Nouvelle Critique*:

> The worker ought to be the hero of society. First, it is necessary to begin by pointing up the dignity of work, the honor of work.

> Children must be given a socialist consciousness with respect to life and it is possible to do so, it is possible to create it.

In consequence, for the first ten years, the Revolution would dedicate most of its time and talents to the implementation of programs destined to promote respect and appreciation for manual work. In this way, they would ensure a solid foundation for the desired *conciencia socialista* (Mesa-Lago, 1979). The revolutionary leadership's view on this topic is best summarised by Castro in the following quote:

> In a collective society where material goods must be produced by all members of society, it is logical that work, training for work, the concept of work become an essential part of the education of the whole person. We must start creating the conditions for all human beings to envision work as the fulfilment of their aptitudes, their intelligence, their vocation, and their personality. And without any doubt, the more we do this, the more quickly we can change the idea people have of work. (Castro cited in Wald, 1978, p. 342)

Thus, the main priority of the revolutionary leadership during those first ten years was to address the problem of changing consciousness rather than focusing on the economy itself. The belief was that the successful development of consciousness (before the development of the material base), could allow a nation to skip the transition stage of development between capitalism and communism and to construct socialism and communism simultaneously (Lowy, 1973; Mesa-Lago, 1979). Harris (1988) explains that ideology plays a vital role in social transformation in revolutionary societies.

> This ideology consists of certain fundamental human values and a body of social theory (i.e., Marxist thought on the construction of socialism) concerning how to realize these

> values in social life. Armed with this ideology, the revolutionary movement has the intellectual means to transform both the material and the subjective or ideological domain of social life. This domain consists of the values, ideals, norms, beliefs, criteria, attitudes, expectations, customs, tastes, symbols, myths, and knowledge possessed by the members of society. In fact, one of the most important aspects of the transition to socialism involves the revolutionary transformation of this subjective domain of ideas, culture, and social consciousness... Thus it is not enough to transform the material conditions of underdevelopment; the subjective conditions must also be transformed and in their place must be developed a new revolutionary culture. (p 41-42).

One of the moves initiated by the government consisted of giving moral incentives to the people because it was believed that, in time, this would stimulate the people's greater desire to contribute towards the success of the revolutionary process. These rewards for workers, students, peasants, professionals, and so forth consisted of medals, plaques and/or other forms of special recognition such as public acknowledgement from the leadership (Mesa-Lago, 1979; Tablada, 1986). Fidel Castro said, as he commented on the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968, that socialism is "not only a society in which exploitation disappears de facto, and poverty resulting from this exploitation disappears, and underdevelopment resulting from this exploitation disappears." For Castro, socialism involves

> all those beautiful aspirations that constitute the communist ideal of a classless society... A society free from selfishness, a society in which a man is no longer a miserable slave to money, in which society no longer works for personal gain, and all society begins to work for the satisfaction of all needs and for the establishment among men of the rule of justice, fraternity, and equality. (Castro, 1968)

Literacy Campaign

Perhaps one of the most important policies related to education adopted soon after the defeat of the Batista dictatorship was that destined to eradicate illiteracy in the island. A contingent of 268, 420 voluntary instructors, members of the *Brigadas Alfabetizadoras*, went to every corner of the island teaching how to read and write to a total of 979,207 illiterates, of whom 702,212 had been successfully taught the proposed basic skills at the end of the campaign in 1961; "the 271,995 left, included the very old people, the mentally handicapped, and more than 25,000 Haitians that could not be taught literacy because they did not speak Spanish" (Garcia-Regueiro, 1970, p. 203). This campaign reduced illiteracy to 3.9% of the total population in Cuba, in comparison to 23.6% in 1953 (Garcia-Regueiro, 1970).

Schools to the Countryside/Schools in the Countryside

One of the outstanding attempts to construct the desired collective consciousness was made with the "schools to the countryside" program that started in 1965. The program was oriented to involve youth in a revolutionary experience aimed at rural development. According to Carnoy (1990):

> The objectives were to eliminate the differences between city and country, establishing close bonds between the school and the daily rural life, to educate the new generation in and for work, and to provide additional labour for the sugar harvest and other agricultural activities. (p. 182)

In the first year of the program,

> 20,000 secondary school students donated free labor in productive agricultural activities. In 1966-1967 140,000 students participated; in 1967-1968 160,000; and in 1969, nearly all secondary school students from all provinces were involved in some part-time agricultural activity. (Paulston, 1971, p. 386)

At fixed times during the year, students went to the countryside for 45 days. Besides their work in the fields, students were encouraged to do community work and learn from the community. They had to do socio-economic studies of the area, research on historical events happening there, and visits to interesting geographic places. They also worked to improve the schools of the surrounding area and set up recreation areas for the neighbours (Leiner, 1975; Wald, 1978).

While the high school system had been devoted to the schools in the countryside, the primary schools developed a similar model where students began cultivating vegetables in the so called "school gardens." This program started as an experiment in Las Villas Province in the school year 1971-1972 and was so successful at getting students' interest and participation, that the school gardens were extended to the rest of the country in 1973-1974 (Carnoy & Wertheim, 1979).

The "schools to the countryside" program began to be de-emphasised after 1970, mainly because it became clear that it would not solve the production problems, students were losing too many days working in the countryside and the schools had less time left to carry on their regular programs (Carnoy & Wertheim, 1979). In reference to this, Castro (1973) said:

> There will no longer be the school to the countryside: there is now the school in the countryside... We will combine systematically study and productive work daily... It permits us to create an economic base from this educational plan because we understand that the production of these schools will cover the schools' investment costs and expenditures. (p. 13)

According to Carnoy (1990), the "schools in the countryside" were actually boarding schools where both urban and rural students from grades seven to ten would spend the whole school year combining study and work in the fields where the schools were built. Depending on the region, the work the students carried out for two hours a day would be related to planting and harvesting sugar cane, coffee, citrus or vegetables. The students would spend the weekends at home. The objective of this program was exactly the same as the "schools to the countryside:" "In this sense, the school in the countryside was no different from its predecessors and maintained the underlying ideology of the revolution, attempting to socialize young Cubans into a socialist vision of society" (Carnoy, 1990, p. 184).

Along with the shift from one program to the other came a de-emphasising and postponement of moral incentives in production. Even though the revolutionary leadership did not abandon their endeavour towards the building of the "New Socialist Man," material rewards started to replace the medals and other forms of moral incentives. Recognition took the form of major household appliances, better salaries or promotions (Carnoy & Wertheim, 1979). Consequently,

> the schools in the countryside as successors in theory and practice to the schools to the countryside through the work process and heavy emphasis on Revolutionary ideology are attempting to [continue] to build a level of consciousness which will make moral incentives in production more possible in the future. (Carnoy & Wertheim, 1979, p. 103)

This shift also reflected profound reforms in the Cuban economy as a response to low productivity in the countryside during the 1960's, to the scarcity of rural labour, and as Carnoy and Wertheim (1979) put it, "to the commitment of the Cuban leadership to agricultural development as the lead sector in economic growth" (p. 103). Thus, the Guevarist model of socialism was gradually replaced by the more pragmatic approach (Mesa-Lago, 1979).

Higher Education

Besides the association of schools with agriculture, the Revolutionary leadership in Cuba focused increasingly on technical education for industrial production. Once students finish their basic secondary education, they have the choice to go directly into vocational training in the industrial or administration schools (called technical schools) or to the university. During the time students attend either vocational or university institutions, they must engage, as part of their curriculum, in productive work, similar to the idea of "schools to the countryside." As before, this has the purpose of eliminating the differences between intellectual and manual labour and making people understand that being a professional, a worker or a peasant does not constitute a major social differentiation in socialism (Carnoy, 1990; Carnoy & Wertheim, 1979).

The Cuban Communist Party as an Educational Structure

The leaders of the Revolution did not always belong to the Communist Party in a formal way. The July 26th movement was actually the political organisation that brought the revolutionary ideals to the Cuban scene during the first years of their regime. There is no doubt, however, that the rebels who defeated Batista had deep convictions which coincided with the communist thought. Nowadays, the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) is the most essential structure of the Cuban Revolution. Its function and position are legally established and recognised in the constitution (Del Aguila, 1984; Rabkin, 1991) which describes the Party as the "'organized Marxist-Leninist vanguard of the working class' and as 'the highest leading force of the society and the state'" (Del Aguila, 1984, p. 152). The goals of the PCC, according to Del Aguila, are "to guide common efforts toward the construction of socialism and progress toward a communist society" (p. 152). In December, 1961, the Secretary General of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers prophetically stated:

> Those who are going to study in the primary school during these years will become adults in a society different from that of today; let there be no doubt about it. The society in which the children will live, for whom we are working in these programs, will be Communist when they are adults. Communist! (García, cited in Read, 1970, p. 133)

In the words of the maximum leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro (1968), communism is achieved

> when society, considered as a whole, with all its resources, looks after the education of each citizen, looks after the health of every citizen, looks after the welfare of each citizen. And all society, once classes have disappeared, once inequalities have disappeared, will work for each and every one of the citizens.

Even though the Revolution accomplished colossal improvements in the lives of Cubans prior to the institution of the PCC, especially in the area of education, there are some scholars for whom the relevance of the Communist Party in the education of the masses is fundamental. Read (1970), for example declares that

> the real revolution in education got underway after October 1965 when the July 26th movement was converted into an organized Communist Party of Cuba. In June, 1965, the Minister of Education, Armando Hart Dávalos, proclaimed the start of a new phase in educational development which would be marked by an aggressive effort to secure an ideological transformation in the moral and social consciousness of every citizen. (p. 133)

Despite the belated merger between the revolutionary leadership and the Communist Party, the socialist character of the Revolution had been declared, as stated before in this chapter, in 1962. This means that the Marxist-Leninist philosophical underpinnings of the process were established long before this amalgamation. The educational role of the revolutionary party was articulated by Castro (1964) in reference to the indolent and comfortable attitude assumed by some people when he vehemently stated that those people were "dangerous to the Revolution" and added:

> To put it simply, those petite bourgeois, idiotic, and ignorant elements must be fought—hard and everywhere. That is the task of our party and it should be the task of our people because of the importance of creating an awareness. We know that awareness is being created among the people. We know that the forces which will overcome all those evils are in the party and in the people. They will overcome all those currents. They will overcome that miserable petite bourgeois spirit which still persists in the Revolution. They are the forces that will overcome all those negative factors.

However, the leader of the Cuban Revolution also rejoices and expresses his pride in describing the quality of people that join the ranks of the Communist Party. On July 26, 1974, Fidel Castro said during the ceremonies marking the 21st anniversary of the attack on Moncada Barracks:

> We must keep in mind that the party is not a mass organization but a select body. The people elect the candidates, and it turns out that a relatively high percentage of them logically have been militants of the party, because the party is recruited and formed of the most conscientious, more advanced workers. (Castro, 1974)

The U. S. Economic Warfare Against Cuba

Me acosa el carapalida que cargo sobre mi, sobre mi pueblo libre sobre mi dia feliz	Paleface relentlessly pursues me; he attacks me, my free people and my happy days
Me acosa con la espuela el sable y el arnes caballeria asesina de antes y despues	He pursues me relentlessly with his spurs, his sword and his harness; murderous cavalry of the past and the future
Me acosa el carapalida norteño por el sur el este y el oeste, por cada latitud	The Northern Paleface pursues me from the South, from the East and the West, from every latitude
Me acosa el carapalida que ha dividido el sol en hora de metralla y en hora de dolor	Paleface pursues me, the one that has divided the sun into the hour of machine guns and into the hour of pain
La tierra me quiere arrebatar el agua me quiere arrebatar el aire me quiere arrebatar y solo fuego, y solo fuego voy a dar	He wants to seize from me the earth, the water, the air, and only fire, only fire will I give him
Yo soy mi tierra, mi agua, mi aire, mi fuego.	I am my earth, my water, my air, my fire
(Excerpts from *Me Acosa el Carapalida* by Silvio Rodriguez, Cuban poet/songwriter)	(Translation mine)

The context in which the Revolution has developed is that of constant struggle in the face of external pressures, mainly against economic warfare created and reinforced by the U. S. government. This economic warfare against Cuba has sometimes turned into military aggression, sabotage and direct support to counterrevolutionary paramilitary groups to create unrest in the Island and to try to assassinate the revolutionary leaders, Fidel Castro being the main target (Green, 1983).

Consequently, insight into these devastating economic challenges appears necessary in this section, since it seems to be the element that has generated more deteriorating effects in Cuban society as a whole. This economic warfare has represented a constant challenge to the development of *conciencia socialista* in the Cuban people, especially during times of food scarcity, and has pressed the revolutionary leadership to be persistent and creative in adopting social, economic, and political measures to keep the support of the people and for the Revolution to continue to survive. In his book, *Cuba at 25: The Continuing Revolution*, Gil Green (1983) says:

> The start of economic warfare against Cuba began on July 7, 1960. At one swoop the U. S. government arbitrarily and unilaterally slashed Cuba's sugar quota in the U. S. market by 95 percent, from 740,000 tons a year to 40,000 tons. This was meant to be the blow that would bring Cuba's leadership to its senses and show it who was the boss. After all, how could Cuba survive without the U. S. sugar market? (p. 20)

This measure would be followed by a series of progressive attacks to the Cuban economy. For example, during the 1960's, the United States persistently instigated attempts to prevent the exportation and importation of products, constantly toughening the measures of the economic blockade, making international trade almost impossible for Cuba. According to Green (1983), the economic blockade had cost Cuba 9 billion dollars by 1982. At the time, it was highly subsidised by the Soviet Union, making its impact much less dramatic than it is today when Cuba does not have the same kind of economic support and has very different trading partners.

The most recent economic setback for the Cuban nation is constituted by the passing of the Helms-Burton Act by the U. S. government in March of 1996. This law authorises U. S. citizens, companies and corporations to take to court any person or corporation that deals with Cuba on property previously owned by them and later nationalised by the Revolution. The objective is for these people to seek compensation for their loss. This law has been criticised by most countries of the world because it tries to apply United Statian laws on citizens and governments of other countries and infringes on the rights of self determination of nations that want to deal with Cuba. Many foreign countries and companies have already been threatened and they have withdrawn from Cuba for fear of reprisals. The effects of the ever tightening trade embargo are more evident now than ever before.

Cuba and Latin America

Undeniably, Cuba has had an important role to play in the world since the beginning of the Revolution. Many epithets have been used, in the last four decades, to describe the feelings of politicians and governments, admirers and foes, leaders of the world and common people, towards this tiny island in the Caribbean. Without doubt "under Castro's leadership, Cuba has become a feared, respected, and influential actor on the world stage" (Rabkin, 1991, p. 144).

The Revolution's policies towards Latin America were applied soon after the defeat of Batista. Especially during the sixties and seventies, Cuba occupied a central place in the Latin American context in relation to the emergence of revolutionary movements throughout the region. Some of the leaders initially believed that the survival of the Cuban revolutionary process depended on the establishment of similar regimes in the continent. It was clear for these leaders that right-wing regimes and dictators would be the natural allies of their enemies – the United States particularly – and fighting them was a means to eliminate threats (Rabkin, 1991). Thus, six months after the Triumph of the Revolution, in June 1959, a group of Dominican exiles and about a dozen Cubans left the Island to fight against the Dominican dictator, Trujillo. During the succeeding years, Cuban revolutionaries would take part in armed struggles of the poor against dictatorships or oppressive regimes in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua and Bolivia. Figures like Ernesto Che Guevara gave impulse to such conceptions with his own example. He was assassinated by the Bolivian army under U. S. guidance on October 9, 1967 in La Higuera, Bolivia, where he was organising a crusade to liberate the continent from imperialism and capitalism.

Because of constant challenges to U. S. authority in the region, this superpower continued its attempts to isolate Cuba from its neighbours. In 1962, after the humiliating defeat of the United States in the Bay of Pigs invasion, the White House succeeded in obtaining a vote suspending Cuba from the Organisation of American States (OAS). In July 1964, a resolution was passed by the OAS requiring that all members break diplomatic relations with Cuba. Only Mexico did not follow the mandate. In an attempt to alleviate the impact of its exclusion from the important organisations in the region, Cuba was instrumental in the establishments of many multinational cooperation and solidarity networks in Latin America. In 1967, the *Organización Latino Americana de Solidaridad* (OLAS) was created with the aim of providing help to the revolutionary struggles and, in 1975, Cuba helped in founding the *Sistema Economico de Latino America* (SELA). Cuba has also been an important member of the Non-Aligned Countries Organisation (NAC) and, during the last decade, of the Ibero-American summit. Any organisation in which the United States is a not a member is welcome (Rabkin, 1991).

The involvement in the struggles of the people, not only in Latin America but throughout the poor nations of the world, was justified by Castro (1982) when he addressed the young communists in the closing of the 4th Congress of the *Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas* (UJC):

> What have we done for others in comparison with what others have done for us? That is the reason for our watchword of paying mankind our debt, beginning with the arms we have

> used to defend ourselves. What is the price of all that? There is also the economic cooperation we have received. I don't like to use this argument too much, because this is not communist reasoning. It may be a logical and dialectical argument, but it is not communist. However, it helps to make noninternationalists understand the situation better. This is not an argument for internationalists. The internationalist way of thinking is: We have to help others even if no one helps us. This is simply a moral, a revolutionary and an ideological duty; a duty that results from principles, from awareness.

On another occasion, during the 68th Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference of Cuba, Castro (1981) described these internationalist ideals as

> the sacred duty of helping in any way we can a brother people who are being massacred and exterminated. If it were within our reach, it would not be immoral or reprehensible to help with arms a people whose offspring, including women, children and elderly people, are being brutally annihilated.

This solidarity towards the oppressed of Latin America has deserved Cuba the affection and deep veneration of the poor and dispossessed. On the other hand, the same dedication to the cause of the oppressed turns the right-wing regimes and the powerful elite of the region into passionate enemies of the Revolution and fervent allies of the United States in its policies against Cuba. Therefore, simultaneously and from within the same countries, Cuba gets popular support from the marginalised and disdain from the powerful ruling elites in a love–hate relationship.

Summary

For almost four decades, Cuba has been building a society where the collective has been placed over individual needs. Class divisions, particular to the capitalist world, have been eradicated through systematic and systemic implementation of initiatives destined to promote an egalitarian society and the so called "New Socialist Man." The education system in Cuba played a fundamental role in the production of this new *conciencia socialista* through the implementation of different programs destined to promote the values of the Revolution. As Gillette (1972) puts it, in Cuba "education is clearly viewed as an important (perhaps the most important) tool for cultivating *conciencia*" (p. 9). The aim of the Cuban revolutionary regime was to promote the "complete development (of the people's individuality) for the benefit of collective interest based on revolutionary principles... The 'New Socialist Man' in Cuba must be one for whom work is enjoyment and not obligation, and for whom study is a permanent process. A man of culture, science and technology" (Jose Llanusa, Cuban Minister of Education, cited in Read, 1970, p. 137).

Since its outset, the Cuban Revolution has been immersed in a context of continuous hostility from the United States, which required from the Castro regime a permanent and watchful formulation of policies and that would enable the survival of the process by maintaining the support of the population. Thus, a series of programs have been instituted throughout the years addressing the issue of the construction of the *conciencia socialista* of the "New Socialist Man." These programs emerged and were implemented based on the philosophical ideals of the revolutionary leadership, which at times did not have a clear idea on how to approach such a tremendous endeavour.

The literature presented in this chapter seems to demonstrate the commitment of the Revolution in its goals of promoting and manufacturing this *conciencia socialista* in the people of Cuba amidst a brutal warfare campaign instigated by its neighbour, the United States. It is the objective of this research study to determine its manifestation in the lived experience of a group of Cubans.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology for this study evolved informally and admittedly somewhat unconsciously. Data for thesis purposes are usually collected *after* a research proposal has been submitted to an ethics committee. In this case, however, the information had already been obtained. This occurred as follows:

(1) My interaction with Cubans visiting or working in Canada occurred regularly throughout a recent 5 year period. Due to my own interest and my *compañeros* eagerness to talk about their experience, discussions were often related to my thesis research interest. I considered these discussions to be useful "background material" for my future research. Only later did I realise that I had become a participant-observer in a cultural group and that these seemingly casual conversations were valuable sources of research information unto themselves.

(2) Later, I decided to supplement the information gathered in this way with more formal interviews. However, this proved to be a more difficult process than I anticipated due to the participants' reluctance to participate in a formal research endeavour. At this point, a major factor was the imminent approval of the Helms-Burton Act by the U. S. congress that had been on the table for many years. This Act turned into a constant threat to the Cuban authorities, whose regime became the centre of attention of the U.

S. media which portrayed it as a "cruel dictatorship." As a consequence, Cuban citizens visiting or working abroad adopted a very cautious attitude when talking about the socio-political and economic situation in the Island. For them, any information fallen in the wrong hands, could be misused or manipulated to further dishonour the reputation of the Castro Revolution and discourage the implementation of trade ventures with important economic partners like Canada. This concern turned even more restraining when the Helms-Burton Act was approved by the U. S. Congress and signed by President Clinton on March 12, 1996. As a result of this law, Canadian firms dealing with Cuba became the centre of the media's attention and the Cuban people where instructed not to get involved in activities that could further jeopardise the situation. The participants knew well in advance that if the Act was signed, it would mean that it would limit their participation in my study. Some were, however, very willing to continue their less formal discussions with me and I determined to act immediately.

Ethical considerations and procedures regarding the information-gathering methods are addressed later in this chapter.

Philosophical Foundations of the Methodology

This study is situated within an interpretive research paradigm. From this perspective, it is assumed that the understanding of human nature would be best addressed by understanding human consciousness (Osborne, 1990). A combination of a phenomenological framework and ethnographic methods provide the basic structure for the research methodology of this study. Both are oriented to *describing* human experience with the ultimate objective of *understanding the meaning* attributed to social experience by persons themselves. From a phenomenological perspective, "what people believe to be true is more important than any objective reality: people act on what they believe" (Fetterman, 1988, p. 18). Osborne (1990) argues that:

> If... all knowledge is human knowledge and apprehended through our phenomenal experience, then the study of phenomenal experience is a good starting place for developing an understanding of what it is to be human... The focus of such an approach is the understanding of persons' experiences of their world(s) and not the generation of explanatory laws... Phenomenological research follows the tradition of descriptive science and not explanatory science. (p. 80)

In an ethnography, it is the search for cultural knowledge that guides the researcher (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972; Spradley, 1980). To do ethnographic research, the investigator must learn to become a member of the group under study. The Greek origin of the word, ethnography, i.e., learning from the people, provides a clue to the emphasis of ethnographic research wherein the researcher engages in the process of discovering and unveiling human interaction, social behaviour and cultural knowledge. Ethnographic methods provide the tools to understand social behaviour in its own context (Simon, 1986; Spradley & McCurdy, 1972).

> Instead of studying people, the ethnographer learns from them. When people are merely studied, observed, and questioned as subjects or respondents, the investigator may be detached. When "subjects" become teachers who are experts in understanding their own culture, the relationship between investigator and informant becomes quite different. The investigator will ask

> those he studies to become his teachers and to instruct him in the ways of life they find meaningful. (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972, p. 12)

Thus, the intention of this study is not the testing of an hypothesis but an attempt to discern the meaning of *conciencia socialista* as experienced by the participants in their daily lives within a socialist society.

Participant Selection

Since the triumph of the Revolution in Cuba in December 1959, Canada has maintained its economic and political ties with the Island despite pressure from its main ally, the U. S. During this period a number of bilateral ventures have been established and people from Cuba have travelled, lived and worked in Canada, and vice-versa. Informal social contacts with groups of workers/visitors who came to Canada from Cuba through these ventures was the initial access to information relevant for this study. Casual conversations with a number of individuals eventually precipitated more elaborated research. Thus, the research proceeded with participant observation as the primary information-gathering approach.

Particular individuals were later approached through purposive selection to participate in more formal discussions. As suggested by many researchers, "the researcher needs to locate those who can illuminate the phenomenon of interest" (Osborne, 1990, p.82). For this reason, the preliminary contacts with many Cubans helped to determine the most suitable participants for the later interviews.

Information-Gathering

Due to the nature of the research question and the coincidental encounter with the various groups of Cubans, participant observation emerged as the natural and most suitable data collection method. In this method, the researcher does not conduct the study in a laboratory but has a direct involvement in the participants' lives to acquire from there the desired information. In Spradley and McCurdy's (1972) words, ethnographic researchers

> go to natural settings to observe everyday activities and record casual conversations among the people there. They interact with people, watch what they do, listen to them talk, participate in their activities, and in that context, describe their cultural knowledge. (p. 22)

Interviews, also occurring within the "natural" environment, supplemented and elucidated information obtained through participant-observation. Phenomenological researchers like Becker (1986), Kvale (1983), and Osborne (1990) consider the interview to be a major means of gathering data. For Osborne (1990) "data are descriptions of experience" (p. 82). Interviews, then, represent the best way for a person to share their experience in a dialogical relationship, after a good rapport is established between researcher and participant. In this process:

> the researcher himself becomes part of the object of inquiry. The researcher in becoming involved with his subjects, enters into their world and engages them in mutually reflective activity. He questions his subjects and himself. Reflection by himself and participants allows new questions to emerge which, in turn, leads to more reflection. In the ongoing process which is

> dialectical and transformative, both researcher and subjects become participants in an open dialogue. (Aoki, 1978, p. 17)

Thus, for this study, both informal and formal information-gathering techniques were employed within the scope of participant observation.[8] These included: (a) informal contacts within social situations and meetings, (b) small group interviews, and (c) contacts with youth.

(a) Informal contacts within social situations and meetings

As a graduate student, I had dedicated an important part of my scholarly research to the social, economic, political and educational implications of the revolutionary regime of Cuba. Moreover, to gather data for thesis research, I had attempted to organise a study trip to Cuba. The arrival in Canada of a large group of people from the Island represented a once-in-a-life-time opportunity for a researcher interested in such topics. In a mix of "Latino solidarity" and eagerness to discover new perspectives, I approached the Cuban visitors with the intent of getting a close look at "The New Socialist Man."[9]

As a member of the Cubans' social circle, I participated in a number of social events. During such events, a natural affinity and rapport emerged between me and some of these individuals and a relationship based on friendship and trust developed. Due to my own interest in Cuba and the participants' willingness to engage in conversation about their country, discussions often were oriented to their opinions and experience of Cuban society. When the Cuban trip failed to materialise, several of my new Cuban friends suggested using their conversations with me as a source of information provided that strict confidentiality was maintained. Afterwards, long conversations, either with the whole group or on a one-to-one basis, followed. These sessions were intentionally informal as my Cuban friends wanted to show me, and I wanted to observe, the human aspect of themselves in their daily lives. Occasionally, the participants also invited me to attend meetings among themselves where they discussed issues of relevance to their activities in Canada and analysed the political situation as they obtained news from Cuba.

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[8] All encounters occurred in Spanish. Quotes are translated into English by the author.

[9] As mentioned, this is the common terminology. In this study, men were the majority but some women were also included.

Therefore, at an initial stage and for a prolonged period of time, information was gathered informally during conversations at friendly get-togethers with groups of Cubans. Every encounter was unique and the dynamics provided me with a variety of scenarios in which I could witness the interaction among themselves and with other people, including myself. For some of the participants, note-taking was not an issue as long as confidentiality was not compromised.

(b) Small group interviews

Much later, I approached some members of the group again to request their participation in a more formal interview-based research approach.

While some were eager to talk, they were wary about many of the common research activities, such as audio taping and signed consent. Four people decided to participate after being assured that their names, occupations, and other elements that could reveal their identities, would be kept strictly confidential and that formal research procedures would be avoided wherever possible. For these reasons, audio taping was not attempted, note taking was kept to a minimum and signed consent was not obtained[10] (see ethics section).

Due to the cultural importance of family social events and the participants' uneasiness with formal research procedures, the desired information was collected within small social gatherings. The conversations were friendly though task oriented. The sole purpose was that of encouraging them to articulate their experience under a socialist regime. The discussions were far-ranging from family living to homosexuality, from socialism to the potential benefits of capitalism, from Castro and Che Guevara, to politics in Latin America, but most importantly, their way of seeing the world and the implications of the educational institutions and the socialisation process in their lives.

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[10] Not only is signed consent problematic from the perspective of protecting identity, it is also a concept that is foreign and dehumanising to socialists because it is considered a symbol of the commodification of relationships as in a market-oriented approach to friendship. A signed consent is seen as a business contract, inappropriate in a revolutionary context. Our mutual honour and word was considered sufficient. To insist would have dishonoured the relationship with my *compañeros*.

(c) Contacts with youth

Another valuable contribution to this research was the visit to Canada of a group of young women and men in an exchange program. I attended some of their presentations on topics related to the Cuban Revolution and had a chance to talk to some of them on a personal level about their own experience as it related to my research interests. Because of the regulations of their exchange program, they could not appear involved in matters that could create controversy. Nonetheless, a few of them agreed to participate after the objectives were clarified and issues related to confidentiality were addressed (the organisation that brought them to Canada will not be named or referred to in this thesis). Once a verbal agreement was reached, I attempted to ascertain the view of the younger generations regarding the current socio-political and economic situation in Cuba to determine what meaning *conciencia socialista* might have for them. The information obtained from this exchange is used throughout this study, however, their input was mainly used in the section dedicated to the views of the younger generation vis-à-vis the people that were born before the Revolution.

Data Analysis

According to the phenomenological approach, there are no specific rules or prescribed methods for the analysis of data (Colaizzi, 1978; Osborne, 1990; Rheinharz, 1983). "The method of the data analysis depends upon the purpose of the researcher" (Osborne, 1990, p. 84). It is commonly recognised by phenomenological researchers that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously as themes or categories develop throughout contact with the participants (Rheinharz, 1983; Spradley, 1979). Thus, as I was collecting information from the participants, I was building and reworking a conceptual framework similar to the process identified by Hammersley & Adkinson (1983) who believe that "theory building and data collection are dialectically linked" (p. 174).

The main focus of the data analysis procedure used in this research is that of looking for common themes and/or patterns in the experiences of *conciencia socialista* of the participants as they emerge. The analysis draws mainly from the language of the participants themselves and their explanation or interpretation of the matter under study. Rheinharz (1983) describes the synthesis of information that is required in order to generate themes which are grounded in the data.

> Pieces of information are compiled, reduced and examined for their interactions (patterns) and basic themes. The more significant is extracted from the less significant within a system of meaning. Parts are strung together to make new wholes – simplicity is sought beneath the complexity. (p. 182)

Following each encounter with the participants, I wrote extensive notes. As I recorded my observations, hunches and patterns, I complemented and extended these with the reconstruction of quotes from the interviews and other conversations. Themes that emerged during the more informal data gathering were often checked out with the participants individually and in the small group interviews.

For the final stages of data analysis, the data was organised into themes from the notes taken during each encounter and from post-interview summaries to capture a meaningful account of the experiences of my co-researchers for the analysis to follow. In reviewing my research notes and summaries (which included participant quotes and my ideas), I tentatively identified a number of common themes based on the frequency of their occurrence and the degree of relevance and importance attributed to them by the participants. For each theme, I opened a computer file into which I organised pieces of relevant information from the notes. Once a pattern was established, I reviewed the contents in each theme file to determine the connections, linkages, relationships among the discreet themes. From there, I organised the themes around three major categories, each of which represented a dialectic relationship between a number of themes. It should also be noted that information was obtained on many more topics of mutual interest; the categories and themes analysed for this thesis are selected for their relevance to the research question.

Ethics

Any form of social research must consider the importance of ethics in the methodological decision-making process to safeguard the well-being of the participants. This was especially crucial in this study due to the sensitive political situation and particular cultural milieu of the study participants. Within this research there are four important ethical considerations:

confidentiality, informed consent, participants' right to refuse or withdraw, and full disclosure of information.

Confidentiality

Protection of the participants' privacy is the main concern in this research. For this reason, pseudonyms are used when referring to them. All information that could identify the participants, including interview location and timing, has been concealed or changed in order to protect their identity.

When there was a doubt about any information or interpretation of it in the process of writing the thesis, I contacted the affected members of the research group for revisions. Some have reviewed the drafts in order to be assured of their anonymity. This is also the reason that the customary description of the research participants is not included in this thesis.

Informed Consent and Full Disclosure

Every participant in this study received a complete description of the goals and procedures of my research whether verbally or in written form. As mentioned above, certain individuals within the social group volunteered their participation in the study after a prolonged period of informal social contacts and conversations. These people were very keen on sharing their experiences with me. Once the formal study became imminent, these individuals were asked for their consent to use the information already collected informally. The research purpose, methodological procedures and ethical considerations were verbally outlined to the group for their consideration. Following a discussion among themselves, this group of Cubans collectively decided to participate and verbal consent was obtained from each. Prior to their participation, the same information about the study was also supplied to those who participated in the small group interviews and the sessions with the youth group. Moreover, an explanatory letter written in Spanish was provided to the small group interviewees (see Appendix). As per the participants' wishes, no consent forms were signed.

Further explanation and clarification of all aspects of the study was given during subsequent contacts with all members of the research group, as well as during the small group interviews and at the participants' request. Participants who were most involved during the informal contacts and all those who participated in the small group interviews will receive a copy of the final thesis.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

The participants were informed of their right to refuse to continue their participation in the research or to withdraw at any time they considered pertinent, without jeopardising the confidentiality aspects agreed upon.

In summary, this research is situated within a phenomenological and ethnographic research methodology which employs a variety of participant-focused strategies to gather and analyse information. In the case of this research, ethical issues were of special significance and required strategies uncommon to many formal research endeavours. In the chapter which follows, I outline the themes which emerged using this methodology.

CHAPTER 4 – THEMATIC PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

For a number of years, I had a chance to experience first hand the ways in which a considerable number of Cuban men and women think and behave. I was welcomed to take part in their lives in a very personal way. The experience of interacting with this group of Cuban people opened for me a door to a different dimension of humanity. By witnessing the behaviour of these men and women as they interacted with each other and with others, I embarked on a journey from where I re-examined the essence of my own humanness. Their optimism, their commitment to the cause of the Revolution, their joyful spirits became the refreshing pedagogical tools of my wandering through their world. From this experience, I was able to formulate a number of themes that were recurrent in most conversations. This thesis represents the life experiences of twelve Cuban people, four women and eight men, of which four were young people.

The themes that I will address in this chapter do not represent every aspect of the lives of this group of Cubans, they are instead an attempt to capture in a coherent manner the most prevailing and recurring topics, relevant to the research questions, that emerged in almost every discussion. Some of the themes emanated as part of my observations and then were discussed more systematically with a smaller group. I have divided the data into three categories to look into repetitious and relevant aspects.

The first part of my data presentation represents a broad category that embraces three themes. I recognise them as inseparable and essential elements manifested in the meaning attributed by the participants to the overall political process in Cuba. Consequently, I introduce three symbols of *La Patria*[11] – The Revolution, Fidel Castro and The Love of Cuba – as a dialectic triad. The second category deals with education in Cuba and the link established by the participants between their experience in the educational system of revolutionary Cuba and *conciencia socialista*. This category is developed through four themes that explore the emergence of *conciencia socialista* as it is promoted by an education focused, not only on academic skill, but also on a particular understanding of manual/intellectual labour and moral contribution. In the third category, two themes look at new challenges faced by Cuba now and in the future. The first theme tackles the controversial, and often disregarded, issue of discontent among the younger generation in Cuba. In the final theme, the participants are asked to project the future of the Revolution by providing some personal predictions.

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[11] In Spanish, the word *patria* encompasses a multitude of symbols that, without being abstract, become part of the popular culture and add further meaning to the understanding of "Motherland" or "Fatherland."

The Dialectic Triad: Revered Symbols of *La Patria*

> The model of Eastern Europe that so easily crumbled over there is not the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban Revolution, that did not come from above nor was it imposed from abroad, has evolved from the people and not against them or despite them. For this reason, it has been able to develop a collective consciousness of *la patria*: the indispensable self-respect that lies in the essence of self-determination. (Galeano, 1992, translation mine)

My prolonged contacts with the participants made me increasingly aware that in order to obtain a comprehensive grasp of their experiences, I had to take a more dialectical look into their lives and not partialise it into distinct aspects in my quest to understand them. Three themes –The Revolution, Fidel Castro, and the Love of Cuba – form part of an indissoluble configuration that concretely constitutes an essential part of the idiosyncrasy of this group of people. Therefore, *La Patria*, the first category, which emerged in the data analysis explores these three recurring themes.

The Revolution

Creo en ti, *lleno de contradicciones* *presto a soluciones* *siempre creo en ti.*	I believe in you, full of contradictions, ready with solutions, I always believe in you.
Creo en ti, *porque nada hay más humano* *que prenderse de tu mano* *y caminar creyendo en ti.*	I believe in you, because nothing is more human than to hold your hand and to walk believing in you.
Creo en ti, *como creo en Dios* *que eres tú, que soy yo,* *en ti, Revolución.*	I believe in you, like I believe in God that is you, that is me, in you, Revolution.
(Excerpt from *Acto de Fé* by Pablo Milanés, Cuban poet/songwriter)	(translation mine)

Arguably, the most important theme for this group of Cubans is the Revolution[12] itself. For the participants, the Revolution captures a multitude of feelings, such as love and loyalty, for their birthplace, the family, their history, their present and future. As illustrated in the following quote, the Revolution not only represents that process by which Cubans defeated the Batista regime and ended years of U. S. influence in the Island but it is reified to occupy a central place in their lives.

> *Mi madre es la patria y mi madre es la Revolución*. The Revolution has taken care of us, has nurtured and educated us. My whole existence is linked to the existence of the Revolution. For me, Cuba and Revolution are one. (Marcelo)

For another participant, Bastian, the values of the Revolution have become part of what his nation means to him. He argued that he could not separate one from the other, nor did he want to. In a like manner, Paula voiced strong feelings when addressing the same question: "When I say Cuba, I mean the people and ultimately, the Revolution." Just as for Marcelo and Bastian, for her, "the love and devotion to the Revolution and to Cuba are the same thing."

From here, I often asked the participants to define the Revolution. Daniel's immediate response, "I am the Revolution," symbolises the general feeling. This simple, yet poignant statement clearly illustrates a widespread attitude among this group of Cubans. It demonstrates the personalisation of a process that, according to the participants, involves them as subjects that are building their history and their future together. David explained that he represents the average Cuban and as such he constitutes an "essential member of the revolutionary team."

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[12] The participants requested that I capitalise the word "Revolution."

The participants often talked about the social ideals and achievements of the Revolution and made comparisons to other countries. Especially evident was their scorn for the U. S. and the pride they took for the better living conditions in the Island in comparison to their rich neighbour of the North. For Roberto, for example, the Revolution means everything that in other countries, including the U. S., the poor people hope for but can only dream of. In addition, he stated: "Revolution means social justice, equal access to education, medical care and decent housing for all, no matter your social or economic status." On the same line, Gabriela, in a very passionate way, said: "In our society, the government makes sure that everybody has some food in their stomachs and a roof over their heads." Later on, she added that the distribution of wealth in her country was not left to the whim of the market forces. For her, it is the Revolution "that ensures that the needs of every Cuban are met." Marco claimed that if the Revolution did not exist, Cuba would be "as poor as Haiti, or any other country where U. S. imperialism has been involved." According to him, the Revolution has not only been a unifying element of the Cuban people but also an "equalising factor, where there are not a few rich enjoying their wealth, exploiting the cheap labour of the majority of the poor people who do not have the means to satisfy their minimal needs, like in the U. S. and every capitalist nation."

At this point, Paula intervened to say: "Probably that's what the Yankees want, to turn us into another United States because they are not happy when there is equality in a country so close to them, it makes them look bad."

Throughout the years, I observed my co-researchers' interaction in a variety of situations. One of the most significant moments, illustrative of their devotion to the Revolution, was their yearly celebration of the 26th of July.[13] While they were in Canada, the Cubans invited Canadians from different ethnic backgrounds to these celebrations that were not meant to be a sober occasion but a moment of sharing their happiness and their dedication to the revolutionary cause. Food and drink, music and dance were the *sine qua non* elements of these gatherings which made the event more delightful and interesting. The following quote is an illustration of the speeches that were made with every toast displaying the devotion of this particular group of Cubans for *la patria*.

> Most human beings can identify what are those things they miss when they are away from their countries. Some people miss their relatives and friends, some miss the food and some miss the landscape. When I think of Cuba, I think about all that. But mainly I think of everything I am today thanks to the cooperative effort of the Cuban people to build the present Cuban society. My greatest thoughts are for the Revolution and what it made of me. (Daniel)

At times, I was sceptical in front of such demonstrations of affection and devotion for their country. I even wondered if they were supposed and expected to promote the ideals of their Revolution wherever they went. I also considered the possibility that they were in Canada as a reward for their services to communism. At such musings, the participants reacted immediately, particularly those who were not members of the Communist Party.

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[13] This day is celebrated in Cuba to commemorate the date, in 1953, that Fidel Castro and a group of rebels attacked the Moncada Garrison. For Cubans, July 26 marks the beginning of the Revolution.

> You do not have to be a communist to love your country. I am not a member of the Communist Party and I came to Canada because of my expertise, not to be compensated. (Bastian)

Bastian's allegation was echoed by the other participants, on different occasions, in consonant assertions as if the dignity of the whole Revolution was at stake. Marco said that, though he was not a member of the Communist Party either, he considered himself a Revolutionary. He said that "in Cuba there are less than half a million members of the Communist Party and there are almost thirteen million revolutionaries." Paula, herself a communist, said:

> I did not come here as a messenger of the Revolution. I did not come here to preach about our Revolution and proselytise. We have no need to do that. Canada has been an important economic ally of Cuba and I don't think it would be wise and considerate to do that kind of politics in the house of a friend. I am though, an ambassador of what my country is through my behaviour and ways of relating to other people. I cannot stop being who I am because I am in this country, and who I am is a result of my upbringing, my socialisation in the context of a revolutionary socialist regime.

Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro is a symbol of national dignity. For Latin Americans, who have been under five centuries of humiliation, a most beloved symbol.
(Galeano, 1992, translation mine)

Throughout my interaction with the participants, I discovered a profound admiration, respect and gratefulness for the leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro, who occupies an important place in their lives. The following segments of the discussions that I had with the participants exemplify the centrality of Castro's leadership in their lives. Gabriela's words best describe the prevailing feeling for Castro among this group of Cubans when she says:

> Fidel has been our guide. He has shared with us his wisdom and the Cuban people are very thankful for this. To many, including me, he represents a paternal figure, a very smart, dedicated and caring human being.

Claudio concurred that he seriously believes that Castro "has a solution for everything" and that "every Cuban trusts him." He continued by pointing out that whenever he has some spare time he goes to the *Plaza de la Revolución* where people have made it a routine to congregate "by the thousands to listen to Fidel and give him their support... You can see there the overwhelming popularity of Fidel and how people love him."

Particularly impactful was the fact that, like Gabriela above, many participants regard Fidel Castro as a "paternal figure" or "a role model" (Fernando), who has never let them down (Marcelo). This almost unanimous sentiment, led me to wonder what is the influence of a paternal leader, in pedagogical terms, in the mobilisation of the masses towards the objectives of the Revolution. Castro's image derives not only from his role in the armed struggle that defeated Batista but from his ongoing performance as a statesman, a politician and a man of broad knowledge. As David put it: "Fidel is a hard working and a very smart person." To exemplify his opinion, he then added: "When he attends meetings with highly specialised professionals, like me, he asks questions that only experts would ask and he knows what to expect for answers, even to very difficult matters." Daniel contributed by saying that Fidel is "the greatest man and political leader of all times," and Roberto added: "You don't have to be a communist to like and admire Fidel." Fernando put it all together by asserting that "because of his strength, his wisdom, his vision and his leadership, Cuba and the Revolution still exist and the Cuban people still have hope."

The Love of Cuba

Amo esta Isla, soy del Caribe *Jamás voy a pisar tierra firme* *porque me inhibe.* (Exerpt from *Amo Esta Isla* by Pablo Milanés, Cuban poet/songwriter)	I love this island, I am from the Caribbean Never will I step onto firmer soil because it inhibits me. (translation mine)

All participants used any occasion to express pride for their country. The name of Cuba was brought forward as an example of all the positive things that exist in the world. Cuba was mentioned when the topic was medicine to indicate the achievements in the area. Cuba would resurface again when the conversation went to agricultural or nuclear engineering. In general, there was no topic for which Cuba could not serve as a reference or example of outstanding accomplishments. Eloquently summarising his fellow participants' feelings for Cuba, Daniel proclaimed:

> I am a Cuban above all and I love my country above all. My country means my family, my friends, the land, the beach, my memories of childhood, the food, the music and the customs, all what I take for granted and I know will be there when I go back. I would give my life to defend my country and everything that it has accomplished. Cuba is nowadays what the Revolution and all the Cuban people have made of it with sacrifice and against all odds. I will go back because I love Cuba and my people and want to continue to work for the cause.

David, after saying that his devotion to Cuba did not necessarily emerge from his political views, stated: "I do think, though, that the Revolution has strengthened most Cuban's love for our nation. Cuba has made great accomplishments and we see a great need to protect her from being destroyed." For Paula, Cuba provides her with everything she needs to survive and this is her reason to love Cuba: "If I want medicine, I have the best quality medical care available. On the other hand, if I want to have fun, Cuba has the best music and rhythms in the world."

Many of the participants remembered as a turning point in their lives the events of April 1961, when Cuba was attacked in the so called 'Invasion of the Bay of Pigs,' sponsored by the United States. For Cubans of all ages, the memory of this time is an affirmation of their love for Cuba. Marcelo, for example, explained that his father participated in the defence of Cuba during this ordeal. He recalled that during those days "every Cuban was ready to give their life to defend the nation. I was only a child then but I already knew that I could contribute to the defence of Cuba even with my bare hands." For David, the Invasion of the Bay of Pigs marked the beginning of his adulthood, because that day "I discovered that I was ready to die for Cuba." Gabriela recalled that the most important lesson for Cubans was that

> the Revolution has to be taken care of. We learned that Cuba is not an abstract symbol but a concrete land of men and women and that it is under constant threats. Its survival depends on our courage to defend *la Patria* and to love it above all personal interests.

Education and *Conciencia Socialista* in Revolutionary Cuba

Después de las labores *ahora voy a estudiar* se fueron los patrones *vinieron a enseñar*	After work nowadays I go to study The masters left they came to teach
Yo que no veo bien *yo que leo tan mal* *yo que tan solo se* *vivir de trabajar*	I, who don't even see well I, who don't even read well I, who only know to live for work
Soy dueño de la rueda *y del viejo azadón* *pero según mi escuela* *soy mas que emperador*	I am the owner of the millstone and of my old hoe but according to my school I am more than an emperor
(Excerpts from *El Viejo Obrero* by Silvio Rodríguez, Cuban poet/songwriter)	(Translation mine)

Education is the vehicle by which the Revolution reproduces the ideals that build the socialist man and woman and integrates them into the Cuban society. As indicated in the literature review, the first priority in the new

Cuban society was to equalise educational access and opportunity; the statistics on both quantity and quality are indeed impressive. The impact of this vast educational initiative upon the participants was revealed in comments such as "even my mother had a chance to study and become herself a professional after being uneducated before the Revolution" (Paula) and "the Revolution gave people like me the opportunity to obtain an education and become whatever they wanted to be according to their skills not to their social class, their race or their connections" (Bastian).

In this section, through an exploration of four themes, I will examine the second major category that emerged in data analysis, that is, an essential dynamic between education and *conciencia socialista*.

Developing an Integrated Understanding and Respect for Manual and Intellectual Labour

As referenced in Chapter 2, the impact of socialist educational initiatives such as "schools to the countryside" and "schools in the countryside" are frequently noted in the literature on Cuba. Evidence of this impact in the actual lives of Cubans lies in the personal experiences related to me by the participants. The following set of quotes reveals a deep understanding and respect for the interrelationship between manual and intellectual labour, which the participants largely attribute to their participation in country-based schooling. Because the participants themselves so clearly and eloquently articulated the importance of these kinds of educational processes to the development of the socialist person, I have quoted them liberally.

> We went to school and we would go to the countryside every year for about two months. We learned to value manual work and appreciate the lives of the peasants and workers of our country. People learn this way that there are no differences between the peasants and the intellectuals, we are all necessary in the construction of our Revolution. This is the way I feel thanks to my exposure to manual labour. (Gabriela)

> I am thankful to the Revolution because it taught me to value the work of everybody in my country and prepared me to do any kind of job when needed... What would be the point in having a professional class looking down on the fellow workers of the nation? That would be no Revolution, it would be the same as in any capitalist society,... Anybody that experienced this program developed a high respect and consideration for the *compañeros campesinos*. (Bastian)

> There are no differences between the peasants and the intellectuals, and we are all necessary for the constructing of our Revolution. (Marcelo)

> [My education] deeply affected my way of thinking... I was, and still am proud to do manual work in the countryside. I remember that everybody felt like this in my class. (Roberto)

Thus, I learned from the participants that the Revolution is determined to break down and eliminate the old hierarchies and barriers that separated manual and intellectual work. As Paula explained, the education system in their revolutionary society "assigns the same meaning to work and study because it presents both as dialectically combined processes." She later added that due to the way people have been educated,

> everybody understands their role in the construction of the ideals of socialism and the material needs facing Cuba today. Intellectuals and manual workers voluntarily contribute time and energy in areas that are not necessarily related to their occupation, for example *la zafra*,[14] because in Cuba, everyone contributes to the Revolution. People don't just sit and wait to benefit while others work.

A Moral Obligation to Contribute in the Revolutionary Society

The importance of "contributing" as in the above quote was a particularly prevalent theme in all their accounts. An intriguing aspect for me was to unveil, somehow, the way a person that has been subject to such kind of altruistic education thinks. In the attempt, I inquired about the mechanisms that operated when they had to make a decision to choose the profession they wanted for their lives and the reason why they made such decisions.

The participants were very aware of the potential for people with similar training and experience to "make an incredible amount of money" in the U. S. or Canada. Paula dedicated considerable time to this theme acknowledging that if she requested political asylum in North America "I could live like I would never dream in Cuba." In marked contrast, one of the most remarkable and amazing discoveries I made was that all of the Cubans that had some form of income while in Canada, were contributing up to half their salaries to the Revolution. I asked if it was an imposition from the

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[14] The harvest of the sugar cane, which is being done mainly manually due to lack of machinery and/or fuel.

Cuban authorities and I was told that it was a voluntary act and there was no way the Cuban government would coerce them into doing it.

Here, the connection implied by the participants is what they referred to as a "moral obligation to *la patria*" (Marcelo), which is learned in their education and gives substance to this altruistic imperative. Paula said that she would never leave Cuba to make more money because

> the government educated me to become who I am. I will go back to Cuba even though I might end up eating shit. This is what I learned at school, when I experienced the sacrifices that many people have made to construct the Cuba of today.

Gabriela expressed the same sentiment which she believes emanates from "the deepest of our hearts, because that is what the Revolution has taught us. This is the only way we can thank the Revolution." Likewise, Bastian claims that "we all send part of our salaries because Cuba and the Revolution need help."

A corresponding moral principle operated when participants selected their professions. Reminiscent of Wald's (1978) findings, the prevailing concern was to choose based on the needs of the Revolution. For example, David asserted that "I chose my profession because I thought I could contribute to the Revolution with my skills and not because I would be able to have more money or status than the rest of my *compañeros*. That doesn't exist back home." Gabriela also provided an intense account of her views on this topic.

> During my whole life I was taught to be sensitive to the needs of my people, not just my own. In consequence, my career choice had to be oriented to the needs of Cuba and the Revolution. That's why I became the professional that I am today and I don't regret it.

On the other hand, the younger people I interviewed also understood that their contribution to society was necessary. However, as can be interpreted from the following quotes, they did not necessarily believe that their role as revolutionaries implied staying in the Island to share the suffering and meagre resources available with the rest of their nationals.

> We [the youth] are part of a society that is struggling to survive and we don't see a solution very near. I would leave Cuba, if I had a chance, to help my country from abroad. I do not have to prove my dedication to the Revolution by starving to death. (Aida)

> One thing is clear for me: There's not much I can do to help my country or my loved ones in the Island right now. There are lots of people that are still revolutionaries and live in capitalist countries and help the Revolution from there. I will probably leave and see what I can do from a rich country. (Claudio)

> There are some young people that do not want to stay in Cuba anymore because of the problems. I understand them, though I don't share their point of view. Of course, nobody can tie them up so they don't leave. I will wait a few more years and see. (Sara)

> During the seventies, when I was growing up, we had everything available: food, medicine, school supplies, social stability. Now that's all gone. The situation makes many people desperate and think of desperate solutions. Canadians live with everything available. There are some people here who want us to keep the Revolution going but they don't know that things are pretty bad back in Cuba. I would love to stay in Canada to enjoy a little of what you have here and also give a hand to the Revolution from here. Why not? (Feranando)

The Emergence of Conciencia Socialista

> This revolutionary process can never be stopped by anything or anyone... Its strength belies basically in the degree in which it has penetrated the consciousness, in the very high degree it has become part of the people's consciousness. When a cause, an idea, becomes part of the consciousness of a people, there is no force in the world capable of destroying it! It is not a fanatical people's attitude. It is not the attitude of a people used to blind obedience, of a people who do things because they are ordered to do so, or because it is demanded of them; rather, of a people who do things because they understand them, because they want to do them.
> (Castro, 1968)

Through an exploration of the first two themes above, I attempted to understand the emergence of "the so called *conciencia socialista* that Che and Fidel were talking about when they started the revolutionary process" (Bastian). On separate occasions and situations, both Paula and Marcelo used uncannily similar expressions which effortlessly connect the two preceding themes.

> My *conciencia socialista* is a result of my schooling and my active involvement in the programs designed to teach us the value of manual labour. An example of this consciousness is my social and moral duty of contributing economically with part of my salary to my country when nobody is telling me to. (Paula)

> The important thing about our education system is that the values that our people are exposed to allow us to be more considerate to the needs of the nation as a whole and not to our individual ones. My *conciencia socialista* emerges from there and I see it as is my social duty of contributing economically with part of my salary to my country when nobody is telling me to. (Marcelo)

Thus, they specifically link their education and schooling to their sense of moral obligation and understanding of labour and refer to the totality as their *conciencia socialista*. Similarly, the young participants evoked their school time as crucial for the formation of socialist ideals. For Aida, who took part in the "schools in the countryside" program, as well as the other young participants, *conciencia socialista* is not something easy to describe, because

> we grew up immersed in a socialist context, being taught in the school that manual and intellectual labour are the same thing, etc. I always knew that everybody was an important member of our society. I did not know what it really meant because I had nothing to compare it with until I travelled out of Cuba.

For others, as Claudio clarifies in the following quote, the process of acquiring the concepts of the Revolution was more evident.

> In the school they talked a lot about it [*conciencia socialista*] and I always assumed it was something good. When I did voluntary work planting trees or participating in *la zafra* and the harvest of fruits, I knew that was what socialism is all about. In Canada, I understand that many people do voluntary work for a certain time, in Cuba, everybody does it all the time as a social duty, and we feel good about it.

The Communist Party

Based on the participants' account of their experiences, I concluded that the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), more than a political institution, constitutes one of the most powerful structures of mass education and mobilisation in the emergence and consolidation of *conciencia socialista*. Therefore, I decided to include it as an essential component of this category on education.

Through my inquiries, I discovered that to be a member of the PCC meant a major honour that people must deserve because "it means that the person's commitment and spirit of sacrifice towards the collective well-being, are being recognised by your peers" (Marcelo). Gabriela said that in order to become a member of the PCC "you must be nominated and the people that nominate you have to give a detailed account of the reasons why they believe you deserve to be a member of the Party." This whole concept of "deserving" to be a member of a political party seemed almost outlandish for me who, without any other merit, can join a progressive party in Canada for five dollars.

My intrigue, though, went beyond the mere political activities within the PCC to establish a coherent link between the goals of the Revolution, the education system and the PCC. Even though not all the participants were party members, they have all been involved, at some point in their lives, in activities organised by the PCC. Roberto stated that "the Party has always been involved in the lives of the people. They organise all sorts of events in the neighbourhoods, such as festivals with music and dance." For Paula, the PCC has a definite educational role:

> *El Partido* does with the population in general, at the neighbourhood and factory level, what the schools do with the children through the curriculum... *El Partido*'s role is to constantly educate and promote the goals of the Revolution to avoid the development of contradictions.

Daniel evoked the times of his childhood when he was a *pionero*:[15]

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[15] *Pionero* or Pioneer is a term that refers to children involved in activities organised by the Communist Party.

> I was very proud of taking part in the Party as a *pionero*. I thought that some day I would be like Che. Actually, most *pioneros* would want to be like Che Guevara... There, I developed a high sense of social responsibility. I learned that a good revolutionary is also a good student. Thanks to that, I was a very responsible young boy.

Contrary to the style in which political parties operate in capitalist societies, David said that, in Cuba,

> *El Partido* has no need to proselytise because they are not interested in every Cuban to join. They want the best people to join, those who work hard, those who contribute more voluntary work. The outstanding revolutionaries join the Communist Party. But the Party doesn't go to you, you have to go the Party.

I asked the participants if membership in the PCC conveys some form of perks or privileges that other people would not have. They all agreed that being a communist, "far from giving you certain advantages, it gives you lots of work and responsibilities" (Paula). For Marco, whose partner is a member of the Party, "it doesn't mean that we have more food to eat or access to better medical care. It brings pride to the whole family and many things to do... They [the communists] know of sacrifices more than the rest of us. They would do anything to help others."

The younger participants, two of whom declared to be members of the youth wing of the party, the *Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas* (UJC), declared their appreciation for the role of the PCC. Fernando, however, confessed not to be "very keen on becoming a member of the UJC or the PCC, because I want to enjoy my youth without too many commitments." On the other hand, Sara readily acknowledged the impact that her communist formation in the ranks of the UJC has had on her life.

> I didn't start as a *pionera*, so when I joined the UJC it was because my classmates put my name forward. I don't regret it because what I learned at school I reinforced through the UJC... I don't know if I or the communists have more *conciencia* than the rest of the people but the Revolution can certainly count on me to defend it to the end.

Challenges

Quiero abrir mi voz al mundo	I want to open my voice to the world
que llegue al último confín	to let it go to the furthest corner
de norte a sur y de este a oeste	from North to South, from East to West
y que cualquier hombre pueda	and that any man be able
gritar sus propias esperanzas,	to shout out his own hopes,
sus heridas, y su lucha	his pain and his struggle,
cuando diga	when I say
¡Cuba va!	Cuba goes on!
Puede que algún machete	Maybe a *machete*
se enrede en la maleza,	will get entangled in the bush,
puede que algunas noches	maybe some nights
las estrellas no quieran salir.	the stars will not want to shine.
Puede que con los brazos	Maybe with barehands
haya que abrir la selva	we'll have to open the jungle
pero a pesar los pesares, como sea	but despite the sorrows, anyway
Cuba va, ¡Cuba va!	Cuba goes on!
(Excerpts from *Cuba Va* by Pablo Milanés, Noel Nicola y Silvio Rodríguez, Cuban songwriters)	(Translation mine)

The Cubans who participated in this research endeavour have experienced firsthand the benefits of a revolutionary socialist society and, as is clearly demonstrated in the categories and themes above, they are highly dedicated and grateful members of that society. Even though the participants admitted to some changes in the way some Cubans perceive the current situation, the majority of them agreed that dissidence in the Island is not generalised. All of them believed that the Revolution and Fidel Castro still count on the support of most Cubans. For example, they cited the elections held every four years in which the people overwhelmingly vote in favour of Castro's continued leadership.

Yet, recent years have brought consequential economic changes that have challenged their understanding of their beloved country's present and future course. The loss of economic support from the former Soviet Union, the economic stranglehold of the U. S. trade embargo and, most recently, the effect of the Helms Burton Act on their international trade opportunities, have heralded an increasing scarcity of basic products such as food, energy and medical supplies necessitating drastic measures such as food and fuel rationing. Some participants spoke about the new commitments necessary to sustain the revolutionary process, such as the voluntary labour used to harvest the sugarcane which Paula referred to above. Some pointed out the irony that they would face upon their return to Cuba where they will have to wait in ration lines for only half a kilo of rice and beans for the whole week, after having access to an endless array of foods in Canada. However, for them, the better proof of *conciencia socialista* is that "in Cuba we do not only share abundance but we also share hunger" (Bastian).

Despite this evidence of an unshakeable foundation to their *conciencia socialista*, however, the participants acknowledged that changes in perception and in economic response are emerging. Some, like Marcelo, admitted that "back home, some people have different perspectives, to the ones we have, on the difficulties facing Cuba."

Framed as questions, the remainder of this chapter is oriented to two important challenges: the generation question and the uncertain economic future.

The Generation Question: Different Perspectives?

Those in the small group interviews, who were all born around the time of the triumph of the Revolution, suggest that the different appreciation of reality may affect the younger generations more than those who knew the situation of pre-Revolutionary Cuba. Bastian proposes that sometimes the rebellious feelings of the youth can be blamed on foreigners that

> bring material things and experiences and the young people in Cuba want to have that... The younger generation is wondering why they cannot have all that... They only know the present misery and their future is very uncertain to them.

He concluded in a somewhat defeated but pragmatic tone: "Ideals tend to disappear when the stomach is empty." Paula, calling the attitude of the younger generation "a definite change," also blamed it on "foreign influence" in the Island that attracts the youth to possess material things that are not available in Cuba nowadays.

Claudio, in an apologetic tone declared:

> Of course, we [the youth] understand what's going on and we know who to blame for all this. The Revolution is not responsible for the situation or Fidel, but there is some

> desperation among the younger generation and I don't know what is going to happen. I hope the situation is not going to last forever. I feel sad because young people are forced to make a choice: Either they stay and face misery and uncertainty or they leave in search of a better life. The second option brings rejection among the *compañeros* who stay.

Gabriela explained that the reason for this is that the Cuban youth "lack understanding of the alternatives available." She argues that some of the young people "do not understand that Cuba cannot abandon the revolutionary principles of distribution of wealth in favour of capitalism." On this point, Marco said:

> We have millions of thankful people that appreciate what the Revolution did for them and still consider themselves to be revolutionaries. However, our youth did not have a chance to experience the horrors of the past and some of them think that it would be easy to abandon socialism in order to improve the current conditions. They are desperate because their future is very uncertain. I cannot blame them. They are not traitors to the Revolution, they are just desperate.

Finally, another of the young people of Cuba, Fernando, expressed his views:

> We don't want to wait twenty more years for this to end... What's the point to wait until you are fifty or sixty to start enjoying life? Why should they [the older generations] ask us to do so? People my age had everything just some years ago.

A Changing Future for Cuba and the Revolution?

However difficult the current events affecting Cuba, the future envisioned by the participants was optimistic. Gabriela considered that there will have to be some necessary changes "if the values and accomplishments of the Revolution are to survive." She added: "We cannot live for ever in the Twentieth Century because the revolutionary ideals are not dogmas." Marcelo articulated some economic solutions for the current difficulties that evidence a radical leap from the more 'orthodox' Marxist discourse. He proposed "a balance between capitalism and communism in a mixed economy," a solution that only a few years ago would have been unthinkable for a revolutionary Cuban to have uttered. An example which they spoke proudly about relates to arrangements with Canadian companies who hire Cuban workers. Canadian companies pay Cuban nationals' wages to the Cuban government who redistributes the salaries according to the socialist principles of egalitarian wages and universal access to public health, education and social services.

Some believed that the capitalist world will have to seek similar arrangements because "the survival of humanity depends on it... The next century will be one of deep changes and surprises all over the world," predicted Daniel. Roberto referred to the responsibility of the Revolution to contribute to global peace and preservation of natural resources as the elements to instigate change. He considered that the only obstacle to world peace is "the United States and its transnational corporations that want to recover what they lost to the Revolution... Once the U. S. lifts the sanctions against Cuba, my country will be in better shape than it is now." However, David did not agree that there is a need for changes and said: "Cuba in the future will be the same Cuba of today; the same people, the same culture, the same traditions." Daniel declared his reticence to promote changes "only to please the United States and become their puppets so they can label us as 'democratic.'" He hoped that the changes that will "necessarily take place in Cuba do not destroy the positive aspects and the legacy of the Revolution." By the same token, Bastian argued: "We do not want to become a capitalist country but we will have to adopt some of the capitalist styles in order to survive. There will have to be some changes but everything will be done, hopefully, considering that Cuba is a socialist nation."

Thus, what I witnessed in these discussions, was a dogged determination to remain faithful to a collective, socialist identity while at the same time attempting to capture some of the economic return available through international trading opportunities with sympathetic nations such as Canada. The participants were convinced that Cuba would retain its socialist consciousness and character while opening up relations with Western capitalist states. The last words on this theme come from Paula who contended that the socialist foundation is solid.

> Cuba has many things that people in the poor countries of the world and the poor of the so called "developed" nations can only dream of. There is no need to dramatically change all that. There is a need to create some mechanisms to allow more foreign investment in the Island while safeguarding the socialist distribution of wealth. We have already started.

Summary

This chapter has been dedicated to an exploration of the categories and themes that emerged in interaction with the Cuban research participants. The participants passionately described their reverence for *la patria*. This establishes the base for understanding the connection between education and *conciencia socialista* which emerges as they are taught the value of manual labour and moral contribution in a collective society. Even in the face of generational and economic challenges and changes in the present and future, the participants generally remain grounded in these basic principles. Each of these categories contributes to unveiling the meanings associated with the two research questions. In the following chapter, I will revisit the literature combining it with the added dimension of the participants' experiences, in an analytical exploration of the two questions.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION: REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The Cuban revolutionary process guided by the Castro regime has undoubtedly had enormous impact on the world political arena. For some, especially the poor nations of the world, Cuba still represents a symbol of resistance, while some capitalist nations regard Cuba as a threat to the stability of democracy and the *status quo* in the current "new world order." In the post Cold-War era, Cuba struggles to survive along with the revolutionary ideals professed and maintained for almost four decades while immersed in a long trade blockade imposed by the government of the United States.

By looking at one important dimension of the revolutionary process i.e., the role of education in the building of *conciencia socialista*, this thesis aims to contribute to an understanding of the struggle and the apparent commitment of Cubans to maintain their socialist ideals in the face of such odds. I hope that the life experience of the twelve participants involved in this study, in combination with the literature, will help illuminate this issue by providing meaningful information and establishing a platform for future discussion of the area.

In this final chapter, I will reflect upon the research findings and the literature, combining them into an analysis which responds to the two research questions posed in Chapter 1. As well, I will review implications and future research directions before concluding.

Conciencia Socialista and Education in Cuba: A Reflective Analysis

At this point in the thesis, one returns to the research questions to guide the analysis of the information obtained from various sources. The two questions which directed this research study were:

1. How is *conciencia socialista* manifested in this group of Cubans?
2. What is the link between the Cuban educational system and the development of *conciencia socialista*?

They will each be addressed in turn by revisiting both the findings and the literature.

Question #1: How is conciencia socialista *manifested in this group of Cubans?*

As is suggested by the categories and themes developed in Chapter 4, there are a number of processes, operating dialectically, that reveal the existence of *conciencia socialista* among this diverse group of Cubans working or visiting in Canada. Having talked with them and shared a slice of their lives, there is no doubt in my mind that such a phenomenon exists within the lived experience of these people.

The first evidence of this is manifested in the category of *La Patria*. To have nationalistic and patriotic feelings for one's country is not uncommon. However, in the case of Cuba, such feelings are explicitly and overtly embedded in a particular socio-political and philosophical context which is clearly and unequivocally articulated by the citizens of that society. Thus, the ideals of the Revolution espoused by their revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, and manifested in the daily administration of the country they love forms the bedrock for the expression of their *conciencia socialista*. Furthermore, the personalisation of that process is striking. So, for example, we note that talk of "the Revolution" and its defence permeates the participants' discussion. As in the words of Rice (1995): "Despite the many economic hardships Cubans face today, most remain loyal to their controversial leader" (p. 94).

Earlier on in the thesis, I wondered about the pedagogical impact of Castro's image as a paternal leader, as described by the participants, in the mobilisation of the masses towards the objectives of the Revolution. Without doubt, Castro is an eloquent and charismatic man of broad knowledge, necessary ingredients to be a successful leader in any society. Moreover, this fatherly perception people have of him appears to strengthen his leadership as it conveys a great deal of trust. At the same time, this trust produces a close connection between the people and their leader facilitating a smooth operation of the system. Echoing the sentiment of my research participants, Stephen Williams (1994) declares that half of the Cuban people refer to Castro as "Grandfather... out of affection" (p. 53). Even Castro's detractors cannot deny his influence. Earle Rice (1995), a fervent antagonist of the Cuban Revolution and its leaders, concedes:

> What is clear is the major impact Fidel has had, not only on Cuba, but on the entire world... Whether history acclaims or condemns his performance, at least one thing seems certain: His legacy will remain. (p. 13)

On the issue of the Cubans' preference for the system in their own country, Rice (1995) refers to the work of historian, Robert Quirk. When Quirk posed the question of whether Cubans would choose to live like people in the United States, trading their current lifestyle on the Island for one similar to that in this developed nation, the response was:

> Imitate the United States? Why? asked the Cubans. True, they wanted political freedoms and a decent standard of living. But their country had no drug problems. No gangs in the cities. No race riots. In the evening young blacks played dominoes under dim street lights. A mixed-race dance group performed Afro-Cuban rhumbas in a [rundown] meeting house. (p. 96)

Quirk also refers to the response given by a worker to a reporter of the New York Times: "I can walk the streets at night without fear of anyone... If you ask me which country I would rather live in, yours or mine, the answer will always be mine" (p. 97). While choosing to emphasise the egalitarian access to resources and collective orientation of the Cuban system, my research participants likewise fervently defended their ideals in contrast to the capitalist orientation of the United States.

While the second analytic category explores the link between education and *conciencia socialista* (which is the second research question analysed in the next subsection), certain aspects of the four themes covered within this category relate directly to the question of the manifestation of *conciencia* *socialista*. Most importantly, the whole issue of moral contribution cannot be understood outside this phenomenon. Unlike the charitable or welfare orientation of many capitalist nations, Cuba's socialist orientation is manifested in the daily lives of Cuban citizens. This is revealed in numerous accounts in the literature and from the participants themselves.

While voluntary labour programs and occupational selection based on the needs of the Revolution, for example, are not new (Carnoy, 1990; Mesa-Lago, 1979; Wald, 1978) in recent years, these and other initiatives have become even more vital. The ever tightening U. S. embargo, aggravated further now by the Helms-Burton Law, has created enormous social problems arising from a languishing economic system and lack of resources. Food rationing became one of the first measures adopted by the Cuban government in their plan to ameliorate the impact of the lack of hard currency. Quirk (cited in Rice, 1995) describes the situation in the Island during his trip in late 1994.

> There seemed to be no end to the crises in Cuba. Lights were going out in the cities. More factories closed. Others operated only during the day. Bus routes were cut. The country was running out of gasoline, of paper, of new clothing, of vital foodstuffs. Children over seven were no longer guaranteed milk. (p. 94-95)

These appalling circumstances, though, do not seem to deter the Cuban people from still taking part in voluntary programs designed to boost the precarious economy of their Revolution and to keep the dream alive. Rather, this increasingly desperate situation has served as a means to test the whole

Revolution and its principles. In addition to measures taken on the Island, the participants in my research demonstrated that the needs of their country also involve hard currency that can be obtained in part from those living or working abroad. Their unforced contribution of part of their salaries is one proof of the general feeling described by many scholars that the contribution to the Revolution is seen as a moral duty of all Cubans. Likewise, most of the people that participated in this study have travelled all over the world. I was amazed when I inquired about their reasons for not seeking some form of asylum in a rich capitalist country which would allow them to make more money working in their areas of specialisation. Their responses clearly indicated that solidarity towards their country and the Revolution take precedence over their desire to live in a better material style. The leader of the Revolution describes this sentiment with eloquent passion in the following quote:

> Undoubtedly, voices will be raised to appeal to people's selfishness. But those of us who consider ourselves revolutionaries will never cease to struggle against individualistic tendencies and will always appeal to the generosity and solidarity of our people. (Castro cited in Pérez-Stable, 1993, p. 112)

The collective over the personal, society rather than the self are concepts that resonate as I write these lines and make me wonder how great can be the love for a cause that inspires such generosity. Thus, even in the face of extreme barriers, altruism and collective orientation rather than individualism and self-gain seem to remain the dominant factors in Cuban people, at a time when their common effort is needed if the achievements of the last 38 years are to be projected into the future.

A remarkable aspect of this process is the integration and personalisation of the Revolution itself into the identity of the Cuban citizen. The participants spoke of the deep commitment they had to the revolutionary process and articulated their role as active subjects rather than passive observers. Daniel's words, "I am the Revolution," still reverberate in memory as the proof that people can become active constructors of their destiny in a different style of democracy, one where people participate with their actions. Fidel Castro elucidates this when he says:

> Everyone here has many social obligations and many political obligations... But this is also bringing about the feeling of being a part, being a participant. No one feels alienated from the process or feels indifferent to the state. Everyone here identifies with the revolutionary state. Today, each Cuban citizen can say as Louis XIV said, *"L'état-c'est moi"* [I am the state]. And this identification between the citizen and the power is decisive, for without it the Revolution could not have maintained itself. (Castro cited in Mankiewicz & Jones, 1975, p. 73)

Resembling the words of Salvador Allende before his death[16] – "history is ours and it is built by the people" – the Cuban process seems to incorporate the people as the builders of their history and consequently, that of the Revolution. As the people become involved, they also acquire certain responsibilities that enable the whole process to project itself into the future even when facing difficult situations like the trade embargo. These responsibilities then, translate into concrete actions that they define as "moral obligations" such as voluntary work in the Island and sending money from abroad.

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[16] The Chilean Socialist president gave his last speech under attack, from the presidential palace on September 11, 1973. Minutes later, the palace was taken by the fascist soldiers and he was executed on site.

The participants' accounts of their participation in solidarity activities towards their country also suggest that their profound identification with the Revolution is supported by a two-way or mutual process. Their solidarity represents a close bond between the people and their government in a unique mutual contribution that enables the solid construction and continuation of the revolutionary process. The reciprocity demonstrated by the Cuban population may be the result of the state focusing its resources and structures to provide health care, housing, education and the highest living standards of the Latin American region to its people. Contrary to populist governments that promise but do not deliver, the *conciencia socialista* may appear stronger in those cases, like Cuba, where the results of the politics and policies of a particular regime translate into concrete improvements in the living conditions of the people.[17] Thus, this equal distribution of wealth in socialist Cuba, seems to give rise, as a natural outcome, to a deep concern for the collective well-being of the population rather than to greed and individualism. That is, as the people are taken care of by the state, a social and economic context where there is no need to compete on an individual level is created. The fact that the people in Cuba take responsibility for the subsistence of the Revolution beyond personal needs exemplifies the remarkable difference between the self-centred approach of capitalist societies where power, prestige and profit dictate the degree of social involvement of individuals. From the participants' illustration of their socialist revolution, it appears that above all people are the centre of the government's concerns, while, as Bacchus (1997) puts it, "in capitalist societies people don't matter because the ultimate goal is profit." This people-centred political and economic system seems to awaken a reciprocally benevolent attitude from the people towards the system that protects them. In the end, the people protect the Revolution because the Revolution protects them and everybody assumes an important role in the continuation of the process.

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[17] This does not, however, account for the hardship that people face at the initial stages of any revolution where food rationing and enormous sacrifices are demanded from the people in order to build the desired society.

The final words of this section, connecting *la patria* and *conciencia socialista* together, are left to the eloquence of Castro himself.

> The revolution shows that ideals are more powerful than gold! If gold were more powerful than ideals, those large foreign interests would have swept us off the map; if gold had more power than ideals, our *patria* would be lost because our enemies have plenty of gold to buy *conciencia* and yet all of our enemies' gold is not enough to buy the *conciencia* of a revolutionary... Workers, peasants, Cubans of dignity have conquered their revolutionary *conciencia*... They will not trade their revolution, their *patria* for gold. (Castro cited in Pérez-Stable, 1993, p. 81)

***Question #2: What is the link between the Cuban educational system and the development of* conciencia socialista?**

Before responding directly to this question, it is important to point out that the development of *conciencia socialista* cannot be solely linked to the educational system. Numerous other systems, including popular culture, are equally responsible for this process. For example, the words and lyrics of the Cuban poets and songwriters included in this thesis inspire devotion and pride for the Revolution. In Latin America, a movement referred to as *La Nueva Canción* (the New Song) or *La Nueva Trova* (the New Troubadour in Cuba), developed during the sixties. Nowadays, Cuban *cantores populares* [singers of the people], such as Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés, are considered to be among the most prominent representatives of this genre. The goal of this movement as described by Reyes (1988) is

> to denounce the social and political contradictions of Latin America. This music and poetry are inserted into the popular culture at precisely those points where we find the forms and language of a folklore excluded from the "cultural industry" controlled by the transnational capitalist system. (p. 447)

Despite its place within the artistic sphere, *la Nueva Cancion* is clearly an educational vehicle in the broadest sense, a point clearly made by one of the most popular artists of this genre, the Cuban poet and singer, Silvio Rodríguez, in an interview (Bermayor, 1980).

> There was a moment [in the sixties] in which the people involved in *la Nueva Trova* discovered the impact of this movement on the youth. In that moment, Pablo Milanés, Noél Nicola and I, started to talk about the role of music in a society like ours. What role should music play? So far, music had been

> relegated by the market to a pseudo art of consumption... In the spirit of our work, we were committed to the revolutionary process. Some people... didn't believe in us because criticism had never been heard through a song. We wanted to explain that we were human beings... and that we were able to make music committed to the social cause and we had to do it because we shared the same problems, the same struggles and the same ideals. That was our objective. It was not only a way of doing but a way of being... I believe that art must educate and entertain. We provide entertainment and education... *La Nueva Trova* has influenced the younger generation... It became the platform for new things to rise under its light. (translation mine)

Notwithstanding the impact of other institutions, the role of formal education in the revolutionary struggle is undeniable. As shown in Chapter 2, when the Revolution took power in 1959, one of its main objectives was to educate the population and incorporate them into the construction of socialism and "the New Socialist Man." The revolutionary leadership configured the educational system in the Island to become one of its most important and effective vehicles of promotion and reproduction of the socialist ideals and ultimately, *conciencia socialista*.

This study seems to attest that the Cuban educational system, with programs explicitly established to promote the new socialist ideals, has produced some effect in reference to the participants' way of being and their willingness to contribute to their society. The participants in this study clearly identified their feelings for the nation and the revolutionary process as an outcome of their education. These feelings manifested mainly in the participants' active involvement throughout their lives in activities destined to improve the common wealth and living conditions of all Cubans. Their actions were considered by them as far from mere kindness or outbursts of isolated benevolence, they were rather understood as the legacy of their education under revolutionary principles that exalt above all, concern for the well-being of the whole society. Their participation in the revolutionary process calls for these kind of actions as indissoluble elements of *conciencia socialista* and are essential for the survival of the Revolution.

Thus, participation in voluntary work programs and economic contribution from abroad are evidence of what they have been taught. Moreover, even their career choices are intimately linked to the needs of their society and, therefore, also a reflection of their schooling. The Cuban Minister of Education in the late sixties was already certain that the people would consider the needs of the Revolution when making these decisions: "The new generation does not ask which occupation is best paid or most secure but rather, what does the Revolution need? Where can I discharge my duty?" (cited in Read, 1970, p. 138).

Another important factor to highlight is the sense of "thankfulness" expressed by the participants when referring to the reasons they contribute to the cause of the Castro regime. For the ones that witnessed the events prior to the revolutionary take-over, the Revolution "rescued" them from poverty, hunger, lack of opportunities, and above all, it gave them the possibility to get an education. Their gratitude towards the government is expressed by sharing a part of what they make through a profession they would not have had without the Revolution.

A prevalent theme in understanding the role of education, both in the literature and in the stories of the participants, is the central importance of education in the process of incorporating people into the Revolution by assigning a deep significance to manual work in a dialectical relationship with intellectual work. In other words, under the Revolution, as Paula explained, work and study are presented as "dialectically combined processes," and the lessons from it result in a great valorisation of manual labour, thus eliminating any form of hierarchy between intellectuals, professionals and the workers. In this way also, the participants link their education and schooling to their sense of moral obligation and their understanding of the role of manual labour as a component of their *conciencia socialista*. Whereas in capitalist economies education is seen as a way to avoid manual labour which, in all forms, is denigrated, Cuba is seen as a "working class society" with a big need for manual labour. This was equally evident in the exhaustive study conducted by Wald in 1978, where she concludes:

> The socialist idea of work is different to the one we have in a capitalist society, where work is seen only as the necessary means to stay alive and feed your family. The socialist ideal considers work as the expression of a person's creative energies. Until this ideal can be reached – in a society without scarcity – work is also regarded as people's collective effort to develop their economy and improve their lives. (p. 341)

Through curriculum that combines work and study in community gardens and craft workshops, for example, and structures such as "schools to the countryside" or its successors, students are constantly reminded of the country's agricultural and industrial needs and their free contribution is seen as being of considerable value for the subsistence of the nation and the revolutionary process. Even the younger research participants evoked their school time as crucial for the formation of their *conciencia*.

Implications and Future Research Directions

Although this thesis provides many answers in my personal quest for reassurance of my convictions, I cannot envision the Canadian establishment looking into any of the ideas formulated herein to weigh them against the insistence of the right wing and the private sector which advocate, for instance, business-schools partnerships intended to create a more "competitive" individual of the future. The education system in any country cannot be isolated from a political context. From this view point, I believe that a radical transformation of the structures of power are necessary to establish the promotion of new ideals through the educational structures of the state. At this time, however, such an idea may be interpreted as nothing more than the banal plea of a "radical" for the overthrow of the system. The capitalist system resists and fights ruthlessly against any concept that may present a danger to the profit-making-individual-competition agenda. Where would an educational system based on mutual contribution, respect for manual and intellectual labour, social participation and equal distribution of wealth fit within such an agenda?

This study carried me through experiences unimaginable for me some years before and allowed me to discover a different kind of people, holders of a distinctive structure of thought. These people gave me the intellectual and emotional fuel necessary to believe that it is still possible to build an alternative social arrangement to the devastating capitalist ideologies. Just as I had perceived as a young child during a short-lived socialist regime, I have recaptured that sense of hopefulness and optimism that the potential of a *conciencia socialista* can bring to a people. From a pessimistic forecast of the future, I now may start to dream that someday human beings will be able to share this world, and the fruits that nature provides, equally and without greed.

It is impossible for me now to conceive that the current globalisation process, that has spread the entrepreneurial drive of the free market all over the earth, can sustain its expansion at the current levels. Through constant and repeated natural and human-made catastrophes in every corner, the planet is communicating the greatness of the devastation produced by uncontrolled deforestation and use of chemicals and fuels that damage the ozone and the air we breathe. Every year fewer and fewer of the inhabitants of this earth are the ones that benefit from this insensitive destruction of a planet that belongs to all – animals, plants and human beings alike.

At the turn of the century and the millennium, neoliberalism rules the world and the process of globalisation has merely globalised the increasing abyss between the rich and the poor across the planet amidst the brutal exploitation of humans by humans. As the repression of military dictatorships is replaced by a far more insidious repression of the market in

Latin America and elsewhere, I am encouraged to continue in my struggle of resistance to injustice and the commodification of life.

I expect that some day, educators will look into alternative ways of approaching education and its implicit assumptions. When that day arrives, my thesis, together with the work of others, will contribute to an understanding of humanity under a different scope: one called socialism. Socialism not as the panacea or dogmatic ideology started over a hundred years ago but as a lifestyle that has, for centuries, already been experienced by most indigenous peoples in this world, whose survival has depended on mutual support and solidarity together with a communion with nature. Only then will it be possible that we talk to our students of sharing, rather than keeping; of giving, rather than taking; of smiling, rather than frowning; of loving, rather than hating; of harmony rather than of confrontation and destruction. The pre-historic times of the late 20th Century would be long gone and only a sad memory to darken history.

Socialism, by providing the foundations for human beings to be attuned to one another, sets the basis for an encounter between humans and nature and the possibility of rebuilding the planet while taking care of it. The most elemental component for human survival is cooperation, which cannot be found in the competitive world of capitalism and its neoliberal ideology of the present. Individual and social cooperation are the foundations for international cooperation and solidarity. How can we find it in a system whose sole purpose is the maximisation of profit for personal gain?

The United States is now the hegemonic power and self acclaimed "police of the world." Today's world is very different to the one known during the sixties by the leaders of the Cuban Revolution, like Che Guevara, whose ideals impregnated the Cuban education system and generated a new society that today struggles to survive immersed in a furious blockade imposed by the United States. Back then, socialism appeared to be an unstoppable reality with widespread popular support to the yet impending revolutionary struggles. Vietnam became the symbol of popular warfare because it had been able to resist and fight the most powerful and aggressive imperialist nation in the world. Nowadays, the poor of the world continue to struggle even though most of their hopes have vanished as the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block have crumbled – nations that once seemed indestructible. Nevertheless, there are still some nations in the world claiming to be strongholds, each with particular characteristics, of socialist ideals – Vietnam, Korea and China – that together with Cuba seem to persevere in flying the flags of socialism despite radical changes in the world order today.

So, what will the future bring for Cuba? Many wonder how Cuba can survive as a socialist nation under the present circumstances. Many people, including many United Statian citizens and companies, also wonder at the motivation of the U. S. in maintaining what seems to be senseless policies and practices against such a small and powerless nation. Castro puts words to such speculation.

> What is the objective of this cruel policy that is asphyxiating a little country like Cuba; trying to defeat, by forcefully imposing hunger, a little country like Cuba; trying to multiply the suffering of the people; trying to bring us to our knees? What's the objective of all that if there's no danger for the national security of the United States, if the other superpower has already vanished, if there's no longer a communist threat in the world? What justification might this policy have? It doesn't have a justification other than of being a maniacal and crazy obsession of repugnant arrogance and haughtiness. (Castro in Borge, 1992, p. 113, translation mine)

While Cuba's future under the continuing presence of such hostility is questionable so too is her future if the blockade should end. With unfettered trading within the neoliberal context of globalisation, would the Cuban people be able to maintain their *conciencia*? What effect would the consumerism and competition of capitalist markets have on the socialist consciousness of this nation? How especially would the new generations be affected by such changes? This research has demonstrated the existence of a *conciencia socialista* within the Cuban population founded on a relationship of mutuality, trust and loyalty between the state and the people. Would changing economic relationships and policies, such as happened in the Soviet Union, change the Cuban state to such an extent that this trust might be compromised, even broken? What, then, would be the basis for *conciencia socialista*?

I formulate these questions in the hope that some scholar may one day continue the investigation of this important phenomenon as times change in one direction or another in this proud and resolute nation. I have yet to examine, and some day I will, the situation of women and homosexuals from a legal and social perspective as well as their contribution to the Revolution and the place they now occupy in Cuban life.

Epilogue

In the 30th year of his death, I dedicate these last words in remembrance of the legacy of one of the most distinguished and important revolutionaries of the world. As I write these lines, my heart fills with emotions because Che Guevara's remains have finally been found and returned to the land he helped liberate. With conviction, I maintain that Che's image is still alive and roams the lands of the poor in any nation, reminding those in power that the seeds of rebellion that he planted represent a great challenge to the triumphalist chants of neoliberal victory. Che's dreams are not the forgotten ideals of a rebel of the sixties. He conveys lucidity and consequence in his passionate pursuit of a utopia that today becomes so necessary in a self destructive world of ruthless individualism. In his life there is a convergence of two essential elements – the rational and the dreams – which, in harmonic rhythms, combine to create the essence of the great revolutionaries who, even though they may appear defeated, are able to change the course of history, carrying the banners of humanity, leaving a clear path for others to follow.

Aprendimos a quererte *desde la histórica altura* *donde el sol de tu bravura* *le puso un cerco a la muerte.*	We learn to love you from the historical heights where the sun of your bravery encircled death.
Vienes quemando la brisa *con soles de primavera* *para plantar la bandera* *con la luz de tu sonrisa.*	You come burning the breeze with the suns of spring to plant the flag with the light of your smile.
Tu amor revolucionario *te conduce a nueva empresa* *donde esperan la firmeza* *de tu brazo libertario.*	Your revolutionary love drives you to new endeavours where they expect the firmness of your liberating arm.
Seguiremos adelante *como junto a ti seguimos* *y con Fidel te decimos:* *hasta siempre Comandante.*	We will continue ahead just as we continue with you, and with Fidel we tell you: until forever Comandante.
Aquí se queda la clara, *la entrañable transparencia,* *de tu querida presencia* *Comandante Che Guevara.*	Here stays the clear, and precious transparency, of your cherished presence Comandante Che Guevara.
(Excerpts from *Hasta Siempre Comandante* by Carlos Puebla, Cuban poet/songwriter)	(translation mine)

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APPENDIX 1

Certificación

Introducción

Este es un certificado de procedimientos éticos relacionados con la tesis magistral de Héctor M. González. Estos procedimientos deben ser conocidos y aceptados en su totalidad por las personas involucradas en estudio. Los procedimientos están orientados a proteger la identidad de los participantes. A sugerencia de los participantes se podrá agregar o eliminar cualquier punto. Héctor M. González está obligado por las leyes internas de la Universidad de Alberta y las leyes canadienses que a ésta rigen, a cumplir fielmente con este acuerdo, que para fines legales es un contrato entre él y los participantes.

Confidencialidad

En el estudio, los nombres de los participantes no serán usados. Tampoco se usarán referencias a su lugar de trabajo, o el tiempo en que se realicen las entrevistas. No se entregará ninguna información que pueda identificar a los participantes. En su lugar se dirá que la informacion fué obtenida en un período de cinco años cuando diferentes grupos de cubanos visitaron Canada. Pseudónimos podrán seran usados para este fin. Los participantes serán consultados cada vez en relacion a este punto.

Nadie, excepto Héctor M. González tendrá acceso a las notas, escritos, grabaciones, etc. que sean usadas para este estudio. Todos estos serán destruidos al final del estudio. Los participantes tendran acceso a las notas, escritos o grabaciones de sus propias entrevistas.

Concentimiento Informado

Cada participante tiene derecho a ser informado del proposito y proceso del estudio. Cualquier cambio será consultado a los paricipantes. Ademas los participantes tendran una copia de este acuerdo y se les entregara una copia de la tesis final. La tesis no sera entregada a la Universidad de Alberta hasta que los participantes hayan leído su contenido y/o entregado comentarios.

Derecho a Rehusar Información y a Retirarse del Estudio

Los participantes podran en cualquier momento rehusar entregar algun tipo de información por cualquier motivo. De la misma manera podran retirarse del estudio, sin prejuicio a los acuerdos firmados.

Para mayor informacion, los interesados pueden contactarme en mi casa en teléfono 433-9797, en mi oficina en el 492-0674, o a mi profesora y supervisora de tesis Dr. Sue Scott en el teléfono 492-0551.